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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE USES OF FICTION IN CHRETIEN DE TROYES
A STUDY OF EREC, YVAIN AND LANCELOT

by

© A. J. BRUMLIK

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
FRENCH LITERATURE

DEPARTMENT OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Uses of Fiction in Chrétien de Troyes: a study of Erec, Yvain and Lancelot", submitted by A. J. Brumlik in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in French Literature.

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Date May 20, 1976

To Joe, Michael and Geoffrey, with love.

ABSTRACT

This study proposes a new approach to three romances by Chrétien de Troyes: Erec et Enide, Yvain and Lancelot. In all three romances it is clear that the narrative proceeds episodically to transmit the idea that the hero, in conforming to ideals of knighthood and courtly love, achieves a perfection recognized by his lady or by Arthur's court. There is nothing new in this assertion. The contribution made by this study is that simultaneously with the linear progress of the romance the episodes are interlaced to form multiple images or prismatic views of a given situation. By linking similar episodes thematically Chrétien reveals that adherence to idealizations of Arthurian life is an error.

Within Chrétien's fiction, the word being taken in the literal sense, Arthur and his court represent a figurative fiction. To the latter are attributed ideals which are then transposed into a figurative reality. The illusions of fiction passing into an extra-fictional world or figurative reality outside the court are harmless unless taken seriously by such knights as Yvain, Erec and Lancelot. Their belief

that such ideals are practicable and their attempts to put them into action result in a loss of reason which is symbolized by the state of anonymity. When reality (the world outside the court) enters into conflict with their goals, they create their own fiction or what I have called a sur-reality, providing for themselves a world in which their actions may be deemed rational by those who accept the conventions of the figured fiction.

While one may infer that the state of anonymity is synonymous with spiritual death, Chrétien refrains from expounding theological doctrine. He restricts himself to demonstrating that the amoral timelessness which pervades romance fiction is inimical to life within time. On one level Arthur's court represents the source of illusory ideals. On another it represents the personal illusions of those inspired by narrative fiction. Arthur's court may then be said to represent the state of mind which romance fiction creates. If these premises are granted, then it can be readily said that Chrétien's fiction is a variety of fictions.

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Over the years that have seen this study completed, there have been many people among my family and friends who have given generously of their time so that I might work. Along with my University friends and advisors, they have also greatly assisted me by their encouragement and their continuing faith in my efforts.

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To him and to all I express my sincere gratitude.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Arthurian Romance
AUP	Annales de l'Université de Paris
BBSIA	Bulletin bibliographique de la société internationale arthurienne
CCM	Cahiers de civilisation médiévale
CL	Comparative Literature
CN	Cultura neolatina
EC	Etudes Celtiques
ELH	Journal of English Literary History
Medieval Miscellany	Medieval Miscellany presented to Eugène Vinaver
Mél. Jean Frappier	Mélanges de langue et de littérature du moyen âge et de la renaissance offerts à Jean Frappier
Mél. Rita Lejeune	Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune
MP	Modern Philology
OL	Orbis litterarum
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association
Rom	Romania
RP	Romance Philology
Spec	Speculum
Sym	Symposium
ZRP	Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, Eugene Vinaver wrote of "The Poetry of Interlace",[1] thereby inadvertently providing at once a word and a tool for approaching problems of unity in Chrétien. The concept of interlace as it is used in the present study[2] bears no relationship with Vinaver's general argument, since he considers interlace a thirteenth-century development not to be found in Chrétien's works. These he considered "free from restraints of design" (p. 52), the episodes linked together by analysis or explanation. The thirteenth century saw the creation of the cycles and a different method for providing "causal perspective":

> It consisted less in explaining the action in so many words than in forging significant and tangible links between originally independent episodes; it aimed at establishing, or at least suggesting, relationships between hitherto unrelated themes; it illustrated, better perhaps than any other contemporary form of art could have done, the scholastic principle of manifestatio. (p. 68)

There still remains the problem of a large number of episodes quite loosely linked on the narrative level, but "since it is always possible, and often necessary, for several themes to be pursued simultaneously, they have to alternate like threads in a woven fabric, one theme interrupting another and again another, and yet all remaining constantly present in the author's and the reader's mind" (p.76). This concept of interlace is indeed helpful in understanding Chrétien because it supposes the ability of the reader to retain and compare episodes not connected on the linear or episodic line, but interlaced or linked thematically.[3]

Applying Vinaver's concept of interlace to Chrétien, one finds that by studying and comparing similar episodes or motifs or turns of phrase[4] in Erec, Yvain and Lancelot, correspondences may be discovered which allow different interpretations to be given to each of the compared passages. They provide a commentary on each other from which the unifying theme or themes of the work can be identified. In Erec, for example, the sparrow-hawk adventure and the two episodes involving treacherous counts are joined together by the theme of the quest of a lady, whether as "lady" or as "wife" or a combination of both. Comparisons of Enide's role in these episodes show not only the dispersal of her own identity into abstractions of dame-femme-amie, but provide insight into Erec's motives in marrying her and then obliging her to accompany him on his quest. The counts are Erec-figures. There is no illusion of nobility to mask their ignoble behaviour. Although this will be discussed in more detail in the main body of this essay, the example has been given to show the complexity of the interlace which joins three widely separated adventures. In Yvain there are two adventures, one toward the beginning and one toward the end, which may be considered obstacles to the accomplishment of a prior obligation; they permit a comparison of the hero's two different approaches to the same problem. In Lancelot there are variations on the father and son relationship,[5] interlaced with the much more important variations on the knight-lady relationship and with the alternating view of Lancelot as a lover or a saviour. In Erec and Yvain the choice made of episodes to be compared is supported by the structure of the romance. In Lancelot examples of interlace are discussed to indicate that the same device is used, although there seems to be no structural link between the episodes compared. For this reason, the discussion of Lancelot is more exploratory than conclusive. In all three romances, however, the narrative progresses in linear or episodic fashion to depict the hero's rise to Arthurian perfection while thematic interlace reveals that such perfection is illusory since in Arthurian perfection the identity of the individual is dispersed into roles or concepts. Personal identity and destiny within time are lost.

Erec is announced in the prologue as a tale which will be remembered "tant con durra crestïantez" (25).[6] The telling of the tale is set specifically and deliberately within the framework of time according to Christian concepts. Then, as the narrative begins, "Au jor de Pasque, au tans novel" (27), time is interpreted differently as that "eternal spring"[7] which is characteristic of Arthurian romance and of troubadour poetry.[8] The culminating adventure in the romance takes place in an enchanted garden which seals lovers away from society by impenetrable walls of air enclosing an earthly paradise where fruit and flower mingle upon the same bough. From this spaceless and timeless void, Erec passes back into the _stasis_ of Arthur's court to emerge as king, for his coronation, into a world peopled with contemporary Plantagenet nobility. Within all of Chrétien's romances studied here there is a confrontation between a timeless world, represented by Arthur's court and a world beyond, in which time and, inevitably, death exist. Within this outer world attempts are made by Maboagrain and his lady, by Lancelot and Guinevere and by Yvain and Laudine, to live out their concept of perfect love, pretending that time, death, and other "contingences terrestres"[9] do not pertain. Disenchantment follows, literally and figuratively: walls of air, sword-bridges and magic fountains lose their supernatural qualities as the concepts of love which they symbolize lose their hold over the people imprisoned by them. Chrétien's romances incorporate a fictional or illusory world, an extra-fictional world which may be called reality, and within that reality a sur-reality created by belief in the illusion. Beyond Chrétien's romance is the twelfth-century reader, situated in a world where time will last "tant con durra crestfantez". That reader knows that no viable ideal can exist outside time:

> ...while time and the movement of events were generally held to be senseless in classical thought, they were profoundly problematical in Hebrew and Christian meditation. For St. Augustine, time was essential to all activity: "Huius religionis sectandae caput est historia et prophetia dispensationis temporalis divinae providentiae pro salute generis humani in aeternam vitam reformandi atque reparandi." But the only value of time as a vehicle for salvation is its transience. Efforts to pretend that such transience could be made to endure would be considered as at once sentimental and disastrous illusions.[10]

The twentieth-century reader is at a disadvantage in reading this kind of romance because, regardless of his religious convictions, he is affected by the prevailing viewpoint that time and space are obstacles to be overcome. As Northrop Frye remarked, man has come to be thought of as "the architect of his own order" since the doctrine of divine creation of the human order has faded out as "a historical and literal fact taking place at a specific point in past time".[11] Thus, from the present point of view, the knight venturing forth into the adventurous forest on his lonely quest seems quite naturally to correspond to Reto R. Bezzola's view that such a knight is seeking a perfection which will qualify him to be king and accomplish his mission in society.[12] John Stevens sees adventure as an inner experience by which the knight discovers his identity.[13] The inner experience is of value to the knight himself and may have no relevance to the world around him. While I accept, in part, Steven's idea of adventure as an inner adventure and his recognition of timeless and spaceless atmosphere surrounding adventure,[14] it should be pointed out that he is establishing various generic principles which may apply to romance as a whole but which tend, nevertheless, to depict man as the "architect of his own order". Chrétien, on the other hand, perceived that between the fiction of romance, whose generic principles he used, and historical and literal fact there was an irreconcilable dichotomy of outlook which he reflected in all three works under discussion here.

I have referred to generic principles followed by Chrétien knowing that there is no way of ascertaining what form Arthurian romance took prior to Chrétien. Margaret Pelan, discussing Le Chevalier as deus espees, speaks of the "loi du genre" according to which the hero is "un chevalier qui est vainqueur dans tous les combats, qui part de la cour d'Artus 'chercher aventure' et qui y retourne, comblé de gloire".[15] There is no indication of a transfer of values from the hermetically sealed court to the outside world. Bezzola, as mentioned above, sees a positive transfer from the court to a kingdom very much apart from Arthur's court where Erec and Enide have a mission, never defined by Bezzola, as king and queen.[16] This bears some resemblance to Joseph Campbell's general view of the questing hero as one who "ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons upon his fellow man."[17] Bezzola's view may have been in part influenced by what romance is supposed to convey, but his attitude reflects exactly the generic principles supplied to him by the narrator in Chrétien's Erec.

Chrétien's narrator in Erec sees Erec's acquisition of a lady in the sparrow-hawk adventure as a service to the court which at the same time confers honour upon Erec himself. The premiers vers forms by itself a generically sound unit. Then, with the marriage, Erec establishes links with the other society, his father's kingdom, which he is also supposed to serve. The narrator supposes a triumphal entry and a happy conclusion to this further development. He is undermined by the author, who produces a marital crisis, and the narrator must begin again to explain Erec's adventures although he never understands their significance. In the course of this quest the reader can perceive stages at which the narrator feels Erec's mission accomplished. Toward the end he makes one final assessment of the situation by interpreting the Joie as Erec's conscious victory over uxoriousness. This is the achievement which allows Erec reintegration into Arthurian society and qualifies him to become king. The generic principles established by internal evidence in Erec correspond to those followed implicitly if not explicitly by those who see Yvain's return to Arthur's court to take part in a judicial duel as the customary return of the questing hero.[18] Such a viewpoint allows one to consider Lancelot's liberation of the prisoners of Gorre as the purpose of his quest[19] and the ultimate defeat of Meleagant to be a victory of good over evil.[20] Romance convention is used by Chrétien on the episodic or linear level while interlace serves to point out the deceptions which such conventions perpetuate. Erec is, however, the only romance in which the narrator is portrayed as a victim of generic principles, always striving to transfer the values of the Arthurian court to the world in which Erec is destined to rule.[21]

Stevens maintains that the matière of romance is Celtic myth and that the sens is the "claim of the ideal". Adventure is the road to perfection, an inner development of the hero: "The 'character' of a romance-hero is rather a rehearsed interior monologue than a meaningful and unpredictable dialogue with the outside world. To put it briefly, the hero has to realize his potential, not come to terms with life."[22] I suggest that the twelfth-century reader would be aware that only a fictional ideal could permit a realization of potential which did not involve "coming to terms with life". Stevens's "rehearsed interior monologue" corresponds to the knight's desire to forge for himself not "nom", which belongs to the outside world, but "renom", which would correspond to the knight's self-concepts. His personality becomes fragmented into sometimes conflicting self-concepts and he becomes anonymous.

In Erec's case, dispersal of identity or fusion of identity with others is clearly depicted as the result of achieving perfection according to his own concept of perfection. His first goal is to become the-knight-and-the-lady following the sparrow-hawk adventure, so that he may resemble the five hundred knights-and-ladies, all nameless symbols of the relationship between chivalry and love at Arthur's court. The title of the romance indicates the fusion of identity with the amie, who is named only on her marriage day. Other composites appear throughout the romance: Cadoc, Yder and Maboagrain are named only in the context of defeat while their ladies are never named. In undefeated perfection the knight is anonymous.

Since Erec has promised to marry his lady, he breaks the equilibrium of the static relationship by giving his lady her identity as wife, and her name, Enide. She is suddenly given a voice as well and, to Erec's dismay, she breaks his illusions about himself by speaking her mind. In the course of the adventures, Erec succeeds in silencing her, reducing her to the silent and worshipful image, the amie which he needs to enhance his status as knight.

Although Enide accepts the role of _amie_ which Erec forces upon her, she never loses her identity as wife and thus never loses contact with the outside world which Erec is so resolutely putting behind him. She never ceases to interact with people around them "in meaningful and unpredictable dialogue", either in defense of herself or of Erec, or to show her love to her parents and relatives. She is Erec's identity on two levels. On the abstract Arthurian level she "identifies" him as a worthy knight simply by her presence. She is a sign, not a person. On the other hand she represents his identity in the outside world, since she remains his only contact with it while he progresses deeper into anonymity. Enide's great love for Erec prevents her from becoming a true _amie_, like Maboagrain's lady, who demands eternal proof of prowess at the risk of her knight's life simply to enhance her position as lady. Erec thus requires another image of himself to become complete. He needs the dwarf, as prefigured in the Yder trio at the outset of the romance. Guivret, the dwarf who, when he first appears, is characterized by his love of fighting for its own sake, is tamed to become simply the voice which tempts Erec on to try the final adventure, the _Joie_. Erec returns to court as the knight-lady-dwarf with Guivret and Enide as masks of chivalry and love, appearing alternately as he alone speaks. He is the image of perfection and, simultaneously, no longer Erec.

Similarly, Yvain is anonymous at the peak of his perfection when he combats Gauvain. His previous attempt at Arthurian perfection culminated in madness. His identity as the Chevalier au Lion can only be found outside the court. Lancelot loses all sense of personal identity when he places his destiny as a knight at Guinevere's disposition. He becomes the Chevalier de la Charrette. His own name has ceased to be associated with knightly prowess. It has relevance only with his role as Guinevere's lover. When this role ends, the tower symbolizes the extent of his self-anihilation, which is so hermetic that the repetition of his own name by the rescuing damsel almost fails to reach him.[23]

In Erec, timelessness and silence are both associated with loss of identity. Enide's monologues as she debates whether she should speak or not always have the effect of slowing down time, and in the first Guivret episode time is altogether suspended while she debates her position. Nevertheless, she speaks for the last time to warn Erec of impending danger. She will assert herself twice more, but on each of these occasions Erec is apparently dead. Erec's apparent deaths are also suspensions of time, at least as far as he is concerned. In each case there is a form of resurrection, once as Erec-Enide, and the second time as Erec-Guivret-Enide. The theme of silence plays almost no part in Yvain. In Lancelot, however, the silences which accompany the hero's trances or paralyses are similar to Enide's inner monologues in that they suspend time and replace action. The trances show the absence of self-awareness, the loss of the "self",[24] and the suspension of action reveals the result of progressive identity loss, the loss also of reason.

In all three romances, the hero's "rehearsed inner monologue", which reflects his concept of the perfection he seeks, is confronted by what should be "meaningful and unpredictable dialogue" with the outside world. I am again using Stevens's words because they demonstrate a conflict which would normally not be found in romance. At the point of perfection or near perfection, Chrétien's hero responds only to conventional knightly situations. Faced with complex situations in the outside world he must fall back on the verbal or behavioural rituals which have no relationship with the situation which confronts him and which requires action dictated by reason not convention. He has lost the power of reason; he has become irrational. In Erec, speech as used by Enide or King Lac is a vehicle for communication of fact. Their subsequent silence preserves illusion by glossing over fact. As the romance progresses, incongruously juxtaposed proverbs and verbal conventions proliferate as an indication that Erec has ceased to perceive any rational connection between words and action. In the giant episode, words almost succeed in replacing action altogether. The narrator in Erec sustains the illusion of Arthur's court and Erec's greatness by an alternate use of speech which does not explain but obscures what is happening, with the use of silence which overtakes him when he cannot explain Erec's behaviour or when he refuses to criticize his hero. I do not think that Chrétien intended to baffle his audience. It is more likely that he was working from a widely used set of conventions which could be so readily recognized as such that the audience would immediately appreciate the discrepancies between the "fact" and the "fiction".

In Yvain and Lancelot, the rhetoric of literary conventions reveals, by attempting to conceal, irrational behaviour. In Yvain, the rhetoric of love provides a fictional morality which justifies the marriage, within a few days, of the widow with the man who killed her husband.[25] A fictional morality governs Lancelot's actions, since he believes that nothing done at the command of love can be shameful. In this way, adultery becomes honourable. Knightly conventions also reveal inverted morality: Yvain claims self-defence in the murder of Esclados and is supported in this claim by the widow, although both know that his presence at the fountain is an act of provocation. The words "adultery" and "murder" are abstemiously avoided by the narrator, in a manner evocative of the use of silence in Erec, but he is none the less quite aware of the implications of conventions which he uses to depict the irrationality of the people involved. In Yvain, the narrator's use of dialectic in arguments with himself or with the reader indicates his grave doubts about the validity of the literary theories which are being followed by the lovers. The passage on Love and Hate seems a parody of dialectic itself, in that each rhetorical question may be answered by "yes" and "no". In Lancelot, the irrational is manifested in the very limited meaning the hero is able to give to the abstract concepts of knighthood. Given a situation in which pitié prompts him to spare a man's life and largesse, interpreted as a courtesy to a lady, prompts him to kill, he must devise a method whereby both conceptions may be satisfied. Thus, in the name of largesse, he kills. There is a total dislocation between the word and the implied action, since largesse is usually that generosity of spirit which moves a knight to spare his opponent.[26] Dislocation between word and implied action is also shown when Lancelot and a lady are bound together by a pledge based on the word coucher, whereas no pledge is valid unless both parties are agreed as to the action implicit in the words used. In this instance, as always, Lancelot's approach to words is literal. The essence of the problem lies in words held in stasis, in fiction, and then used by one whose fictional perfection has produced in him a mental *stasis* which is manifested by the inability to relate concept, which is word and meaning, and the appropriate action.

On a much broader level, Chrétien is always interested in the fiction which words alone can produce. The adventure of *Pesme Aventure* in *Yvain* and the giant episode in *Erec* are created by words which have no value unless one accepts the fictional conventions of adventure. Arthur's hunt, which allows Erec to return briefly to the court, is a fabrication. The hunt is suggested by words associated with hunting and the suggestion is conveyed that the encounter with Erec is a happy coincidence. A close look reveals, however, that the court is hunting for nothing other than Erec, or renown. This one episode unmasks the nature of the renown which is supposed to be the hallmark of the court. It is a renown gained not through action but by questing for knights whose adventures, recounted but not seen, enhance the reputation of the court. "Re-non" exists by the power of the word, not by action.

Arthur's court is consistently represented to be a centre for knightly action, even if Arthur himself is passive.[27] One assumes in *Erec* that the five hundred knights are all going to fight, but they merely argue. All those in *Yvain* who come to Arthur's court for help, find Gauvain gone, and no one who will offer to fight for their rights. Yvain assumes that he will lose his chance to fight at the fountain if he arrives with the court, because if either Kay or Gauvain asks for the honour it will be granted. Gauvain, however, spends his time explaining why Yvain is absent and Kay asks for the combat. Gauvain, illustrious in tournaments, offers his services only once, and to the sister acclaimed to be in the wrong. He is the man of courtesy, that is to say, of words which replace action or conceal inaction. Kay responds to the challenge thrown down by Meleagant in Lancelot, not Gauvain who follows but arrives too late, chooses the easier bridge crossing and causes considerable trouble by having to be rescued. The facts never support the myth that Gauvain is a great knight. Kay, the discourteous and ineffectual knight, represents the unmasked state of Arthurian chivalry,[28] while Gauvain represents the mask, the courtesy, the unsubstantiated renown which gives the court its appearance of knightly vigour.[29] The illusion exists quite independently of the court, through the medium of conventional words used in conventional situations. The illusion feeds not on the actions of heroes but on tales told, events recounted, or, more simply, upon words. Nor is Arthur's court the fountainhead of courtly love.[30] All fictional ideals, whether of love or chivalry are bound in stasis while the court continuously moves, spreading its illusion among those of the outside world. For purposes of the narrative, the court exists as a locus amoenus, but as an illusion it becomes an interiorized concept of what the knight and the lady should be and do. Those who put theory into practice discover that they have no place in the outside world, for they are seeking a perfection which can only exist in the timeless immortality of fiction.

Those who first studied Chrétien's works accepted at face value the conventions and the traditions of narrative poetry. Presented with incongruities in the convention, they sometimes ignored them, or were tactful about them, like Jean Frappier, or wrote short-tempered footnotes, like Gaston Paris, or were simply rather amused, like Gustave Cohen.[31] Their enjoyment of Chrétien as a poet and their faith in his high moral content allowed them to put aside incongruities and posit for each romance an ascending rise to moral perfection on the part of the hero and perhaps also of the heroine. Bezzola and Myrra Borodine[32] belong to this tradition, which has had such tremendous influence that more recently published writers such as Claude Luttrell, Z.P. Zaddy, Helen Laurie and U. T. Holmes[33] still approach Chrétien's works according to this basic assumption. Interpretations of Chrétien's works as Christian allegory also use the same framework.[34]

Most of the above writers perceive in Chrétien's works an occasional flash of humour or intermittent use of irony, but without seeing a sustained use of both, undercutting the literary conventions. The presence and importance of irony in medieval works has gradually come to be recognized[35] and, essential to this discovery, the distinction was made between the author and the narrator.[36] For those interested specifically in Chrétien, Peter Haidu's study of irony and comedy in Cligès and Perceval represents a major breakthrough.[37] He demonstrates that irony as used by Chrétien corresponds to classical traditions handed down to the middle ages and taught in schools. Chrétien's use of irony is shown to go beyond the verbal level to the structural level. In both cases it serves as commentary on the literary conventions consciously exploited. Haidu's most recent book demonstrates Chrétien's iconoclastic use of the traditional repertoire of symbols at his disposal.[38]

Others are also aware of conventions being undermined in Chrétien's works. Whitehead[39] thinks there is a parody of social ideals or of their literary manifestations. Nolan sees generic parody in Yvain and Cligès, although, like Haidu, he tends to view Erec as a conventional romance.[40] On the contrary, I find that there is generic parody in Erec, as well as in Yvain and Lancelot, but not just parody for its own sake. Chrétien did not indulge in iconoclastic literary practices simply to amuse an audience, even though we now have reason to believe that his audiences would have appreciated this new approach to the conventional romance.[41]

Much of what Chrétien had to say concerned the nature of love. In *Yvain*, *Amor* is frequently *cupiditas* and *amor* is *caritas*. In *Erec* and *Lancelot*, love is most frequently portrayed as desire, although only explicitly so when it is non-courtly, thus making courtly *cupiditas* honourable by euphemism. Such love is essentially self-love.[42] Furthermore, the quest of the Arthurian absolute can be construed as adventure leading away from reason or from a personal destiny within time and therefore away from salvation. Perfection is clearly synonymous with spiritual death. Yet these conclusions remain extra-textual. They derive from attitudes imputed to the shared intellectual assumptions of medieval readers. I would agree with D.W.Robertson that in *Lancelot* courtly love is *concupiscentia carnis*, and that the hero's actions are unreasonable.[43] The same could be said of *Yvain* and *Erec*. I do not agree that Chrétien is preaching theological doctrine extolling the order of caritas.[44] His target is not *cupiditas* but *Amor*, a literary convention. *Caritas* is depicted as a strong social bond, but one which may be abused. Gauvain's defence of the sister in the wrong is a blatant example; but there are others, more subtle, in *Yvain* especially, where kindness is motivated by self-interest. Contrary to Stevens's proposal for romance in general, that the characters are "white and black, good men and bad men, saints and devils", and that there is "very little room for the comfortable, smudgy greys of ordinary life",[45] Chrétien's characters appear to be "white and black" only because the superimposed conventional roles which dictate their actions are like masks which conceal the complexity of motivation. Motivations often remain unclarified, occasionally to tease the reader,[46] but more often to express the confusion which persists in the minds of the characters themselves, as they cease to think and act reasonably. Chrétien remains sympathetic to their cupiditas, as to their other human frailties, for he has created them addicted not to sin but to fiction. He is portraying folly, not damnation. The most basic folly does not concern love at all; it concerns belief in words as if they were referential.

By creating Arthur's fictional world, Chrétien is prompting the reader to question the validity of words which imply values and yet have no inherent value. He is demonstrating how words can create false reality of their own. In each romance one word may be singled out as a target for the author's ironic comment: in Erec, kingship; in Yvain, justice; and in Lancelot I suspect that the target is not love, but the concept of knighthood.

NOTES

[1] Eugene Vinaver, *The Rise of Romance*, "The Poetry of Interlace," pp. 69-98 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). Subsequent page references will be given in the body of the text. Jean Frappier also speaks of interlace but in the context of creation of suspense rather than of thematic interlace. *Etude sur "Yvain" ou "Le Chevalier au Lion" de Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris: Société d'Edition d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1969), pp. 63-64.

[2] The scope of this study is limited to *Erec*, *Yvain* and *Lancelot*. Since Peter Haidu has made an excellent study of *Cligès* and *Perceval*, I did not deem it necessary to include them in the present study. *Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troyes* (Geneva: Droz, 1968).

[3] Applying Roman Jakobson's discussion of metaphor and metonymy to the relationship between the episodes in Chrétien's romances, the relationship on a plainly superficial level of plot is metonymic. The meaning that can be deduced from the episodes not contiguously placed comes from their relationship in metaphor. "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," *Selected Writings*, II (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1971): 254-59.

[4] A recent and thorough study by Wolfgang Brand reveals the frequency with which interlace is used, especially in *Erec*. *Chrétien de Troyes* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1972), especially pp. 16-41.

[5] This aspect of Lancelot is discussed by J. Mandel, "Elements in the *Charrette* World: The Father-Son Relationship," *MP* 62 (1964-65): 97-104. Since Mandel's emphasis is on filial disobedience and corresponding retribution, his approach to the question differs from my own.

[6] Unless otherwise stated, verse references are made to the editions of the *Classiques français du moyen âge: les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris: Champion). These include *Erec et Enide*, ed. Mario Roques, 1966; *Cligés*, ed. Alexandre Micha, 1965; *Le Chevalier de la Charrete* and *Le Chevalier au Lion*, both ed. Mario Roques, 1965.

[7] John Stevens, *Medieval Romance* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1973), p. 149.

[8] Jean Frappier considers Arthurian love to be a fusion of the *fine amor* of the troubadours and the fairy love of Celtic adventure. *Amour courtois et table ronde* (Geneva: Droz, 1973), pp. 43-56. Although timelessness is not of interest to him, he tends to associate it with the Celtic Otherworld into which the quest leads the knight (p. 48). For a more relevant discussion of timelessness in troubadour poetry, see E. D. Blodgett, "This Other Eden: The Poetics of Space in Horace and Bernart de Ventadorn," *Neohelicon* 3 (1975): 229-251.

[9] Frappier, *Amour Courtois*, p. 53: "Autrement dit, féerie et réalité ne sont pas séparées dans les récits arthuriens par une frontière infranchissable, et nous avons là, selon toute vraisemblance, un reflet du mythe celtique d'après lequel Autre Monde et monde ordinaire s'ouvraient l'un à l'autre en faveur d'un héros ou d'un amant élu par la fée. De ce fait, les personnages des lais et des romans bretons vivaient dans un univers poétisé, situé au-dessus des contingences terrestres, à mi-chemin entre le réel et l'idéal." Frappier sees fusion where I propose a dichotomy.

[10] E. D. Blodgett, "Chaucerian *Pryvetee* and the Opposition to Time," to be published in *Spec*, 1976. [The quotation of St. Augustine is from *De vera religione*, CSEL 77, 6, 5: 39.]

[11] Northrop Frye, *Fables of Identity* (New York and Burlingame: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963), p. 162.

[12] Reto R. Bezzola, *Le sens de l'aventure et de l'amour* (Paris: La Jeune Parque, 1947), p. 232.

[13] Stevens, *Medieval Romance*, p. 80 and pp. 169-70.

[14] Stevens, *Medieval Romance*, pp. 148-49.

[15] Margaret Pelan, *L'influence du "Brut" de Wace sur les romanciers français de son temps* (Paris: Droz, 1931), p. 139.

[16] Erich Köhler considers Arthur's court a political ideal. "Quelques observations d'ordre historico-sociologique sur les rapports entre la chanson de geste et le roman courtois," *Chanson de Geste und höfischer Roman*, Heidelberger Kolloquium, 1961 (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1963), pp. 27-30. Political ideals of the twelfth century are best exemplified in the *Policraticus* of John of Salisbury. An examination of Book IV will show that there can be no possible rapport between Arthur and Salisbury's prince. In Book VI, ch. 1-19, Salisbury discusses the highly trained, highly organized militia which acted only upon the command of the prince. Salisbury's commonwealth could not differ more from Arthur's society: "Then and then only will the health of the commonwealth be sound and flourishing when the higher members shield the lower, and the lower respond faithfully and fully in like measure to the just demands of their superiors, so that each and all are as it were members one of another by a sort of reciprocity, and each regards his own interest as best served by that which he knows to be most advantageous for the others." (Book VI, ch. 20, p. 244). *The Statesman's Book of John of Salisbury*, translated by John Dickinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927). Arthur's court is not an organized social or political unit. As will be discussed in the studies of the romances themselves, the court lacks leadership and purpose. Chrétien portrays it as an actual place only for purposes of the narrative. It is otherwise simply an aggregate of often conflicting concepts.

[17] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 30.

[18] Frappier, *Etude sur "Yvain"*, pp. 204-6

[19] F. Douglas Kelly, *"Sens" and "Conjointure" in the "Chevalier de la Charrette"* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton & Co., 1966), pp. 100-2. Jean Rychner, "Le prologue du *Chevalier de la Charrette* et l'interprétation du roman," *Mél. Rita Lejeune*, II, sees Lancelot as a messianic figure (1132) and indicates agreement with Kelly (note, 1135).

[20] Jacques Ribard, *Chrétien de Troyes: "Le Chevalier de la Charrette"* (Paris: Nizet, 1972), p. 155. Jean Charles Payen, "Les valeurs humaines chez Chrétien de Troyes," *Mél. Rita Lejeune*, II, considers Gorre "un *regnum servitutis* qui s'oppose de tous ses maléfices à la lumière du règne arthurien" (1089).

[21] Vance Ramsay, "Modes of Irony in the Canterbury Tales," *Companion to Chaucer Studies*, ed. Beryl Rowland (Toronto, New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 295-96: "More often than not, irony of manner involves the adoption of the guise of an ignorant but earnest and well-meaning innocent . . . often there is a false or exaggerated praise of another . . ." Ramsay is speaking of the way in which a narrator or speaker may present himself. His comments on dramatic irony are also pertinent, since one may consider the narrator in *Erec* to be a character. He quotes Germaine Dempster: "Dramatic irony is the irony resulting from a strong contrast, unperceived by a character in a story, between the surface meaning of his words or deeds and something else happening within the story." [*Dramatic Irony in Chaucer* (Stanford: Stanford University Publications in Language and Literature, IV, 1932), p. 7.] On the use of the narrator as a misguided guide to the story, see also E. T. Donaldson, *Speaking of Chaucer* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972), pp. 1-12.

[22] Stevens, *Medieval Romance*, pp. 170-71.

[23] For another view of the meaning involved in Chrétien's titles or double names, see Barbara Nelson Sargent, "L'*autre* chez Chrétien de Troyes," *CCM* 10 (1967): 199-205.

[24] Regarding Lancelot's trance at the window upon perceiving the queen, Moshé Lazar comments: "Chrétien nous avait souvent dépeint les symptômes de cette maladie qu'est l'amour, mais ici, il n'en retient qu'un seul, celui de la volonté détruite, celui de la personnalité aliénée . . ." *Amour courtois et "fin'amors"* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1964), p. 236.

[25] "The narrator's general comments here are scarcely distinguishable from his way of presenting the situation as a whole. We are not clearly conscious either of the narrator as a personality or of the presence of the audience. The comments have merged into a general discourse on love and have become part of the rhetoric of romance." Stevens, *Medieval Romance*, p. 216. On the contrary, the hyperbolic excess of the rhetoric alerts the reader to the narrator's presence and to his purpose, which is to create the widest possible disparity or incongruity between what is happening and what is conventionally supposed to be taking place.

[26] P.-Y. Badel, discussing knightly or courtly qualities in general, interprets *largesse* as liberality in the material sense. He also says, however, that the knight is "généreux envers l'adversaire vainou. Il a la pureté d'un coeur qui ne se satisfait pas des situations troubles. Il ne se réfugie pas dans des paroles équivoques." *Introduction à la vie littéraire du moyen âge* (Bordas: Mouton, 1957), p. 77.

[27] Nitze and Köhler consider Arthur a "roi fainéant". W. A. Nitze, "The Character of Gauvain in the Romances of Chrétien de Troyes," *MP* 50 (1952): 222. Köhler, "Quelques observations," p. 30. For other remarks on Arthur's passivity, see Gustave Cohen, *Un grand romancier d'amour et d'aventure au XII^{e} siècle* (1931; reprinted Mayenne: Joseph Floch, 1948), p. 157; Jean Marx, *Nouvelles recherches sur la littérature arthurienne* (Paris: Librairie Klincksieck, 1965), pp. 50-51; Philippe Ménard, *Le rire et le sourire dans le roman courtois en France au moyen âge (1150-1250)* (Geneva: Droz, 1969), p. 314; Pelan, *L'influence du "Brut"*, p. 139; Lorenza Maranini, "*Cavalleria* e *Cavalieri* nel mondo di Chrétien de Troyes," *Mél. Jean Frappier*, II: 738. For Maranini and Nitze, Gauvain is the leader and voice of wisdom in the court. All consider the court peopled by worthy knights prepared to seek adventure or combat from the highest motives.

[28] Stevens, *Medieval Romance*, refers to Kay as an "irritant" and "positively nasty", "a grain of grit in a well-oiled, smooth-running courtly machine" (p. 180). He suggests that since one does not identify with Kay against the idealisms of courtliness, then perhaps Kay can be seen as an artistic foil: "the courtly appear more so, in contrast to him" (p. 181). Stevens seems to sum up the conventional view in his second suggestion and the anti-conventional view in his first; I suggest that Chrétien deliberately invoked both. See also B. Woledge, "Bons vavasseurs et mauvais sénéchaux," *Mél. Rita Lejeune*, II: 1274: Chrétien seems to have been the first to demote Kay from the rank of considerable dignity which he held in Wace. Those who followed Chrétien apparently created a much nastier character in Kay.

[29] D. Karl Uitti, *Story, Myth and Celebration in Old French Narrative Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973) discusses the character of Gauvain in Chrétien's works, pp. 222-25: "Within Chrétien's entire *oeuvre*, the figure of Gauvain most aptly illustrates what we might call this tempered play of realities and appearances so characteristic of his novelistic world. Gauvain is what he is, but, structurally speaking, what he means is a function of how he is narrationally used, of the juxtapositions to which he belongs" (p. 223). Because Gauvain is a foil for the hero, he remains a static figure: "A certain irregularity is missing in Gauvain; he is perhaps too perfect, or maybe his perfection is merely too external. There is no vital tension between what he is and what he appears to be that might justify, on his part, the effort toward *dépassement* that Chrétien seems to celebrate above all else in his knightly heroes" (p. 224). Unfortunately, Uitti's views and mine cannot altogether coincide, because of his basic premise that Chrétien's romances demonstrate a highly conscious artistry which aims at creating out of fiction its own coherence as apart from any ethical or historical values (p. 202). Here, however, he perceives that Gauvain is static, whereas the other knights are subject to change and development.

[30] Stevens, *Medieval Romance*, pp. 55-56, to the contrary.

[31] Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris: Hatier, 1968); *Etude sur "Yvain"*; Gaston Paris, "Compte rendu de *Erec und Enide* von Chrestian von Troyes, hgg. von W. Foerster," *Rom* 20 (1891): 148-66; Cohen, *Un grand romancier*. Vinaver suggests that the Celtic tales (the *matière*) provide "une certaine incohérence voulue." The *sens* is derived from the completely coherent courtly story imposed by *conjointure* upon the basic tales. See *The Rise of Romance*, p. 41 and *A la recherche d'une poétique médiévale* (Paris: Nizet, 1970), pp. 114-16.

[32] Bezzola, *Le sens de l'aventure*; Myrra Borodine, *La femme et l'amour au XII^{e} siècle* (1909; reprinted Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1967).

[33] Claude Luttrell, *The Creation of the First Arthurian Romance* (London: Edward Arnold, 1974); Z. P. Zaddy, *Chrétien Studies* (Glasgow: University

of Glasgow Press, 1973); Helen Laurie, *Two Studies in Chrétien de Troyes* (Geneva: Droz, 1972); U. T. Holmes *Chrétien de Troyes* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1970). Wolfgang Brand, *Chrétien de Troyes*, also follows this traditional approach.

[34] Jacques Ribard, *Chrétien de Troyes*; Tom Artin, *The Allegory of Adventure* (Lewisberg: Bucknell University Press and London: Associated University Presses, 1974).

[35] D. W. Robertson, "The subject of the *De amore* of Andreas Capellanus," *MP* 50 (1953): 161; "Chrétien's *Cligés* and the Ovidian Spirit," *CL* 7 (1955): 41; "The Concept of Courtly Love as an Impediment to the Understanding of Medieval Texts," *The Meaning of Courtly Love*, ed. F. X. Newman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1968), p.3.

[36] D. H. Green, "Irony and Medieval Romance," *AR*, pp. 49-64. Green says, regarding the irony of values: "It has obvious connections both with verbal irony (where parody of courtly vocabulary or clichés could reflect on the courtly ideals they stood for) and the irony of the narrator (whose double role as narrator and poet gives us a further view-point from which to question courtly conventions), but it is sufficiently important to be taken as a separate category" (p. 59). See also my note 20.

[37] Haidu, *Aesthetic Distance*.

[38] Haidu, *Lion-queue-coupée* (Geneva: Droz, 1972): "Mais son emploi du symbolisme en général, et même des sens spécifiquement religieux, est surprenant de liberté. Sa technique consiste à mettre en jeu l'objet symbolique, soit à l'état brut, soit dans un contexte qui en suggère la valeur symbolique. Dès que cette valeur est établie et que le sens de l'objet est clair (par définition, par le fonctionnement de l'objet, par l'action), le processus symbolisant peut être interrompu: quelque nouvel élément narratif contredit le sens précédemment suggéré. De sorte que si le processus symbolisateur aboutit à doter l'objet d'un sens, celui-ci peut parfaitement bien être refusé. Ce n'est pas seulement le contenu intellectuel du symbole qui devient l'objet du jeu littéraire de l'auteur: le processus de la symbolisation lui-même est ainsi traité" (p. 80). I am tempted to think that Chrétien's dislocation of symbol and meaning is an extension of his dislocation of word and meaning.

[39] F. Whitehead, "Yvain's Wooing," Medieval Miscellany: "It is the virtuosity with which Chrétien manages an almost unmanageable story, the skill with which he steers it into the channels he wants it, and most of all, the bold use of a dialectic which he knows, and the audience knows, to be comically specious and wilfully perverse that produces most of the pleasure and satisfaction that can be extracted from the work" (pp. 326-27).

[40] E. Peter Nolan, "Mythopoetic Evolution" Sym 25 (1971): 139-61. He says that much of the irony derives from the differences which exist, Chrétien implies, between the real world and the world that obtains within the genre of traditional romance (156).

[41] It would seem, according to Benton's evidence, that there existed no social disorder corresponding to what we now call courtly love and especially not at the court of Marie de Champagne. John F. Benton, "The Court of Champagne as a Literary Center," Spec 36 (1961): 588-90. Regarding Chrétien's Lancelot, he says, "Chrétien has gone out of his way to describe behavior he could be sure the courtly audience would condemn." "Clio and Venus: An Historical View of Medieval Love," The Meaning of Courtly Love, p. 28. Rita Lejeune, after discussing the great influence Eleanor of Aquitaine had on the development of courtly literature, points out that during the period of her imprisonment interest in such literature rapidly waned. Released, she remained in retirement until the death of Henry II, when her interests centered around politics, not literature. "Rôle littéraire d'Aliénor d'Aquitaine et de sa famille," CN 14 (1954): 45-48. Works such as Andreas' De amore, Chrétien's works, and possibly Béroul's Tristan would then have been written during a period (1173-1189) when audiences might have turned away from conventional romance. Luttrell's new chronology of Chrétien's works places Erec between 1184 and 1186; Cligès, 1185-1187; Yvain and Lancelot, 1186-1189; and Perceval, 1189-1190. The Creation of the First Arthurian Romance, pp. 26-46.

[42] Etienne Gilson, La théologie mystique de Saint Bernard (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1947), p. 52, cites St. Bernard: "l'amour charnel est celui par lequel l'homme s'aime lui-même, pour lui-même et avant toutes choses." [De dilig. Deo, VIII, 23;

P. L., t. 182, c. 988: "Et est amor carnalis, quo ante omnia homo diligit seipsum propter seipsum."]

[43] D. W. Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962), pp. 448-52. His introduction (pp. 3-51) provides the frame of reference for his view on the relationship between *cupiditas* and *caritas*.

[44] For opposition to the theory that the theme of charity is omnipresent in medieval poetry, see E. T. Donaldson, "Patristic Exegesis: the Opposition," *Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature*, Selected English Institute Papers, 1958-59, ed. Dorothy Bethurum (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 1-26.

[45] Stevens, *Medieval Romance*, p. 169.

[46] Mes cuidiez vos que je vos die
quex acoisons le fist movoir?
Naie; que bien savez le voir
et de ice, et d'autre chose,
si con ge la vos ai esclose:
(*Erec*, 6420-24)

CHAPTER II

EREC ET ENIDE

A General View

While there is a considerable diversity of opinion concerning the interpretation or purpose of some episodes in Chrétien's *Erec*,[1] there is no dispute over the basic story line, namely Erec's rise to perfection as an Arthurian knight. There is general agreement that in this romance married love is praised, with one outstanding exception. Reto R. Bezzola proposed that Chrétien's purpose was quite the opposite, that Erec's marriage was a mistake for which the subsequent adventures atoned.[2] For Bezzola, the Arthurian court represents the courtly society; Erec's marriage, like Maboagrain's life in the garden, is a rejection of the courtly society and therefore wrong.

Despite Bezzola's elaborate symbolic structures,[3] his book still provides a comprehensive textual analysis which gives the plot a persuasive unity provided one accepts Bezzola's basic premise that the work extolls courtly ideals. And it is indeed on this level that the romance proceeds as "straight" romance, without ironic cross-fire. On this one level Bezzola's interpretation is sound.

He discusses first the premiers vers. The hunt for the white stag is a successful attempt to acquire for Erec a lady of his own, a basic necessity in a courtly society (p. 109 and p. 117). The marriage which follows the premiers vers is a mistake. It is the cause of recréantise, for while one may joust for one's lady, one does not do so for one's wife (p. 141). By the departure in search of adventure, Erec is inviting Enide to became "lady" again. Bezzola underlines Erec's isolation: he is estranged from his wife and from knightly companions at Arthur's court. The subsequent adventures are divided into three parts. Up to the point of his overnight stay at Arthur's moveable court, Erec undergoes l'aventure subie: la lutte pour le "moi". This group of adventures includes the defeat first of three then of five robber knights, Enide's outwitting of Count Galoain who is prepared to kill Erec in cold blood to possess her, and Erec's defeat of Guivret who seeks not material gain or Enide, but honour. Enide is decked out as a lure and obliged to be silent, since interference would indicate lack of faith in

Erec's prowess (pp. 158-60). The defeated Guivret becomes a friend. Erec's isolation is ended, his prowess proven, and he should now be ready to return to Arthur's court. But in his own mind the adventure is not yet finished. He must do more than defend himself. He must now undertake l'aventure acceptée: la lutte pour le "toi" (pp. 179-80). At the behest of a lady, Erec liberates her lover from two giants. Bezzola assumes incorrectly that Erec was very badly wounded in this battle, whereas no injury was sustained. His old wounds from the Guivret combat re-opened during the ride back to rejoin Enide. This error allows Bezzola to develop the theme of "self-sacrifice" (pp. 182-3), as Erec's new attitude towards love. In fact the next two adventures are more subies than acceptées: Erec faints at Enide's feet, awakening from what is presumed to be death in time to save Enide from yet another lecherous count, de Limors. This episode shows him again as the "défenseur du faible et de l'opprimé" (p. 185). There follows his reconciliation with Enide and what Bezzola feels to be a rather gauche episode in which he is again attacked by Guivret and nearly killed (p.188). Nursed back to health, he is now ready for l'aventure cherchée: la lutte pour la communauté. In the first series he proved his prowess. Now he knows that his wife loves him "parfitemant": "Or, un amour parfait ne pouvait être inspiré que par un chevalier capable d'atteindre à ce haut degré de désintéressement qui fait tout sacrifier, sans rien demander" (p. 193). Guivret will be the unwitting guide to the ultimate adventure. Bezzola mentions that they follow "le droit chemin" to Brandigan and insists that Guivret tries to talk Erec out of the *Joie* adventure, although he does add that it was imprudent for Guivret to use the word "aventure" three times (p. 202). Erec had to vanquish Maboagrain even though the man was not *recréant*, even though "son amour a rehaussé sa chevalerie; inspiré par sa passion, il a emporté victoire sur victoire" (p. 220). His passion, like his size, was not in moderation. He was guilty of *démesure*. His love was not a source of joy to the community as a whole.

The coronation represents Erec's final rehabilitation. Enide becomes Queen by virtue of the coronation (not the marriage), symbol of the couple's mission in society (p. 232). For Bezzola, Erec's coronation is almost an apotheosis. The final pages of his book overflow with conflicting symbols, particular stress being placed on the robes with the figures of the quadrivium embroidered on them:

> . . . les quatre arts du quadrivium qui conduisent à la sagesse, sont considérés comme les moyens fournis à l'esprit contemplatif pour saisir l'immensité de l'espace (géométrie), le sens des nombres et du temps (arithmétique), l'harmonie du monde par les sons (la musique), et le sort de la vie humaine, éclairé par la lumière divine (astronomie). (p. 242)

Bezzola's justification of what he considers to be Chrétien's intended omission of the trivium is pertinent only in that he sees a rapport between the arts of the quadrivium and the four cardinal virtues of temperance, courage, prudence and justice. Bezzola has clearly shown all the associations which would flock to the mind of Chrétien's reader, but has failed to see the disparity between the deliberately solicited associations and the text itself.

If Erec's adventures are viewed simply as chronologically ordered events, or paratactic juxtapositions without links, the narrative proceeds according to Bezzola's interpretation. However, the adventures are interlaced, each step reflecting other events, adventures or characters. The prismatic effect of each episode on other facets of the romance suggests criticism of the hero's concepts of love and chivalry, thereby providing the author's comment on what the narrator considers laudable. The narrator never criticizes Arthur, and only comments negatively on Erec's behaviour when he ceases to understand what is happening, that is to say, when Chrétien has neglected the superficial narrative level to operate on the ironic level, for example in the second Guivret encounter (4901-5144). The narrator's lack of comment on Erec's mistreatment of Enide is the most blatant example of his bias.

The analysis of Erec which follows will show Erec to be a pacifist and a lover of physical comforts who attempts to reconstruct his life according to the example which he believes that the court provides. Initially he considers himself to be unlike the other knights at court. The hunt for the stag has the effect of forcing Erec into proving himself as a knight. In the process he wins a lady but can scarcely wait to leave Arthur's court so that he may enjoy his wife in peace. Enide, concerned about her husband's crumbling reputation, inadvertently reveals her distress in terms which are taken by Erec as a negation of the renown gained at Arthur's court. He leaves with her on a series of adventures in the course of which he is transformed into the perfect Arthurian knight. He is then attracted to the *Joie* adventure because it seems to offer renown through combat and a reward of sensual delights. He discovers that the couple in the garden are living out the Arthurian illusion that the knight must continually risk his life in combat if he is to retain the favours of the lady. With his victory Erec destroys the illusion basic to Arthurian society. He returns to Arthur's court where the king is ill, dejected and feeling abandoned by his knights. Erec remains there with the two attributes of Arthurian knighthood, Enide (love) and Guivret (honour), until the death of his father permits the realization of another *joie*, which he hoped to find in kingship (6638-9). The ironic treatment of the final scene indicates that the joy of kingship will likely be as unattainable as all the other joys Erec has sought.

The "premiers vers"

a) The Mask of Kingship

Arthur's court is initially presented as a place of childish strife and dissent where the choice of the most beautiful damsel almost results in armed combat among some five hundred knights (41-58, 291-306).[4] As Gauvain points out, this will not decide the merits of the situation (ou fust a tort ou fust a droit, 56) but Arthur will not listen to him. He has invoked the custom of the white stag, whereby he who kills it will kiss the most beautiful maiden (35-38). He has spoken and he will not go back on his word (59-66). Nor is Arthur able to handle the mutinous court when he himself takes the white stag and claims his right to bestow the kiss.[5] "Par san" (307) he begs Gauvain for advice, to save his honour and his "droiture".[6] A council of barons cannot help. They merely argue until the queen interferes and tells them to wait for Erec to return. They all agree, "even the king" (341). This cannot be the ideal court to train Erec for his future kingship. It is an example of rampant anarchy, controlled only by a woman's decision.[7]

Yder's arrival at court produces a flurry of anticipation and excitement. Guinevere is very much in the foreground, whereas Arthur remains somewhere within the castle. When Yder comes before the king, Arthur remains aloof from the conversation between Guinevere and Yder until he feels he must assert himself: he asks the queen to release Yder from her "prison" (which is in effect a pardon, 1201-1205), and exacts from Yder as punishment that he remain at his court as part of his household (1221-26). The last line of his speech, "et s'il nel fet, a mal li tort", is the only show of severity, and it is quite pointless since Yder is only too happy to remain (1232).

Upon the arrival of Erec, Arthur is there with the queen to greet the couple. He personally assists Enide from her horse. Once the hero is welcomed, Guinevere becomes the central figure until the time comes for the bestowal of the kiss. This is Arthur's great moment. All the amenities are graciously observed. He accepts his wife's unsolicited opinion that Enide is "la plus gente" of all the ladies, and then consults his barons for their opinion. He states his own position (1743-4), but leaves room for discussion. It is understood, I think, that no knight is going to fight Erec. Inasmuch as Arthur is quite safe, he launches into a speech on kingship:

> Je sui rois, si ne doi mantir,
> ne vilenie consantir,
> ne fauseté ne desmesure;
> reison doi garder et droiture,
> qu'il apartient a leal roi
> que il doit maintenir la loi,
> verité, et foi, et justise.
> Je ne voldroie an nule guise
> fere deslëauté ne tort,
> ne plus au foible que au fort;
> n'est droiz que nus de moi se plaigne. (1749-59)

These sentiments are such that John of Salisbury himself could not complain, were it not that none of this is in fact applicable to Arthur who has shown himself quite indifferent to the vilenie and desmesure of Yder who condoned the lashing of the queen's maid.[8] She is surely one of the weak (foible) for whom he should consider himself responsible. Erec has defeated Yder, but from motives of anger and personal revenge and without decision on the part of the king, whose one attempt to mete out justice, in Yvain, proves a failure. Since the king does not make judicial decisions, the sword becomes the means for both decision and punishment, altogether contrary to the beliefs of John of Salisbury.[9]

The following lines are Arthur's justification for upholding the customs of his ancestors. The people do not want new customs and laws, he claims, and he will uphold the old ones come what may (1760-70). John of Salisbury would not have approved of this:

> Amid such current practices the studies of philosophic men are held in ridicule; if aught is heard that is new, it is straightway condemned as profane; or if it comes from a person of small consequence, it is scornfully brushed aside. For that it should be brought to the test of reason or authority is altogether too much to expect. If you urge reason or authority in its support, they will cast in your teeth "custom" which they abuse, or which they themselves have made.[10]

Arthur's summing up at the end (1771-77), asking for the verité, the opinion of his barons concerning the kiss of the white stag, reduces the whole speech to ludicrous vacuity: all that is involved is a kiss. Arthur's speech is empty verbiage to create the illusion of kingship and thereby maintain appearances.

b) The Illusion of Nobility

Appearances are the very foundation of the illusion in *Erec*.[11] The narrator's general assumption that things are what they seem encompasses the specific assumption that noble rank implies nobility of character. Chrétien constantly points out the error of this assumption. The clearest examples are the two brutal counts who lust after Enide and at the same time wish to marry her because she will enhance the illusion of their nobility.[12] Yet another count, Enide's uncle who championed Yder in the sparrow-hawk contest, abandons his vanquished knight without a backward glance to ingratiate himself with Erec, the victor, and, more important, the prince (1251-62, 1269-77).[13] The expression "kings and counts" recurs throughout the romance like a leitmotif signalling some form of illusion based on appearances. Enide's parents are victims of the illusion. Recognizing the beauty and intelligence of their daughter, they hope that fortune will bring her a king or count as husband. They accept Erec's credentials at face value, handing over to him their one treasure and joy.[14]

Erec is named in the prologue as the son of Lac immediately prior to Chrétien's first reference to kings and counts (19-20). Within Arthur's court he is referred to simply as Erec (81-82), and when he defeats Yder he names himself simply as Erec: "Erec ai non" (1057). This is his identity as a knight. To the vavasour, however, he must present his double identity if he is to win Enide. He pompously pulls rank:

> Puis dist: "Sire, vos ne savez
> quel oste herbergié avez,
> de quel afeire et de quel gent.
> Filz sui d'un riche roi puissant:
> mes peres li rois Lac a non,
> Erec m'apelent li Breton;
> de la cort le roi Artus sui,
> bien ai esté trois anz a lui.
> Je ne sai s'an ceste contree
> vint onques nule renomee
> ne de mon pere ne de moi,
> mes je vos promet et otroi,
> se vos armes m'aparelliez
> et vostre fille me bailliez
> demain a l'esprevier conquerre,
> que je l'an manrai an ma terre,
> se Dex la victoire m'an done;
> la li ferai porter corone,
> s'iert reïne de dis citez. (647-65)

He emphasizes his father's wealth and power and plays down his connection with Arthur. The vavasour knows war and its aftermath, poverty. Erec's promise to take Enide to his land to be crowned is understood by the vavasour to mean that Enide will escape a life of hardship and be treated with the honour that befits her beauty and intelligence (531-40). It never crosses his mind that Erec will treat her as a drudge. The promise itself is misleading. Erec speaks as if he were already king, able to make Enide queen almost immediately. His second speech (1306-36), after the victory, talks of riches and rank to be bestowed upon Enide's parents "an ma terre, qui mon pere est et moie aprés." He sets out his position as prince rather than king. Enide will accompany him the next day to the king's court and there he will marry her. He will take her dressed as she is to be robed by "ma dame". Arthur and Guinevere are not named. It is not obvious at first that Lac's court has been replaced by Arthur's court. Victory in the combat has changed Erec's perspective. Enide's parents are to become rulers over two cities as if they were rightful lords (1856); they will be far away in Lac's kingdom (1316) completely cut off from their daughter, who will return with Erec to Arthur's court to be crowned queen of beauty as Erec's lady. Enide's future position as reigning queen is implicit in the promise of marriage. Her parents realize that the honour they desire for her will come only "à la parclose" (1454).

Chrétien has established the distinction between the outside world which honours rank and wealth, and the Arthurian world in which the knight and the lady reign supreme, rank and wealth being taken for granted. The illusion that noble character accompanies noble rank is repeatedly made explicit but is not developed within the romance. Its function is reserved primarily to support the irony of the final coronation scene. It is rather the illusion of the knight-lady relationship that is developed as the basic theme of the romance. Appearances replace reality altogether as Erec becomes the victim of the Arthurian dream.

c) The Knight, the Lady and the Dwarf

At the outset the narrator claims that Erec is esteemed by the Arthurian court, and yet the reader is aware that Erec is not really part of it, ostensibly because he lacks a lady. He absents himself from the hunt without pretence, telling the queen he has come to keep her company. His dress indicates that he has no intention of joining the hunters. Descriptions of dress are not digressions in Erec. They usually serve to point out the presence or absence of appearances. This passage is carefully structured to convey the idea that Erec is not really a proper Arthurian knight.[15] Chrétien has described the king's hunting clothes (72). The hunters are riding chaceors (74) and armed with bows and arrows (75). Erec is not dressed for hunting, nor is he fully dressed as a knight. He rides a destrier (94) and carries a sword (103-4) but is without armour. He is incomplete.[16] The elegance of his dress perhaps evokes his rank as prince, but it is more likely that this detail indicates a softness in Erec, a lack of agressiveness, which is further accented by the narrator's insistance on his beauty.

> et fu tant biax qu'an nule terre
> n'estovoit plus bel de lui querre.
> Molt esteit biax et preuz et genz
> et n'avoit pas .xxv. anz;
> onques nus hom de son aage
> ne fu de si grant vaselage;
> que diroie de ses bontez? (87-93)

Other knights are qualified as "hardiz et combatanz et fiers" (31-32) or "vaillant et hardi" (54). They have the fighter instinct, whereas Erec is essentially beautiful. The adjective genz relates to his lineage or upbringing. Preuz and vaselage suggest skill in the field of combat but lack the connotations of belligerence inherent in the description of other knights at court.

Beauty in Erec is not a manifestation of great intellect or even a natural attribute of youth and vitality. Erec is almost twenty-five years old. Strictly speaking, he is no longer a youth. His beauty, like Enide's and that of others in the romance, is an indication of sensuality.[17]

The rhetorical question, "que diroie de ses bontez?", is followed by the description of his dress, which emphasizes his beauty in terms of elegance. The meeting with the dwarf armed with a whip portrays Erec as lacking not only the external trappings of knighthood but the inner combative spirit as well. He stands by as the queen is insulted and her maid lashed. He moves forward only upon the request of the queen to be lashed in his turn. The narrator comments on the wisdom of his restraint:

> Folie n'est pas vaselages;
> de ce fist molt Erec que sages:
> rala s'an, que plus n'i ot fet. (231-233)

While the reader would not quibble with the narrator's assessment, Erec himself feels that he has not reacted as would any one of Arthur's knights. He attempts to justify his behaviour to Guinevere:

> mes nus nel me doit reprochier,
> que ge toz desarmez estoie: (238-9)

He feels that to avoid reproach he ought to have jumped into the fray without hesitation, and that he now risks the stigma of recréantise. The speech is lengthy, the justification of his behaviour comprising some twenty lines, which are followed by twenty more explaining what he intends to do (234-71). He must find arms, thereby equipping himself, externally at any rate, as a knight.

The anonymous knight, the lady and the dwarf together represent the symbol of Arthurian chivalry. Yder appears as "the Knight", fully armed and on his charger. In almost every mention of him his arms are stressed (140-41, 227, 240, 325, 343) in contrast to Erec, who is quite disarmed in all senses of the word (que ge toz desarmez estoie, 239). The knight has his two attributes: a lady (equally anonymous) and a violent little figure who represents chivalry in its most blind and vicious state, that unrefined brutality which makes a knight seek combat against anyone.[18]

Chrétien very skillfully transfers the characteristics of the dwarf to the passive knight who first appears as "bel et adroit" (150). The dwarf is "fel et de pute ere" (171), "cuiverz" (208, 235), "fel et contralieus" (214) and "fel tant con nus plus" (218). He is full of "felenie" (164), a "fauture" (199). Notwithstanding this, he will be well received at Arthur's court, nor will such pejorative language be applied to him again, once Erec has defeated Yder. But at this point in the story, when the silent knight makes no move to restrain the little figure, pejorative words are applied to the knight himself, although the language is a bit more refined. He is "vilains" (198), "felon et desmesuré" (228), "vilains . . . et outrageus" (241), marked by "orguel" (243). Yder's pride is manifest in his assumption that he is the best knight of all (780-85, 1042-46). The dwarf aspects of his character make him abuse the power he has. His complete lack of conscience is implied in his disbelief after his defeat that he could ever have done Erec any wrong (998-1008). He has forgotten the whole incident. Admittedly and significantly, he does not recognize the armed Erec or associate him with his victims of the day before, but his protestations of innocence seem rather to indicate the knight's ethical detachment from his own acts of violence.

The dwarf figure is handled on two levels. On one level he is an exteriorized *persona* who can be held responsible for the knight's unwarranted acts of aggression. Or he can be interiorized as that which makes the knight aggressive (*hardiz et combatanz et fiers*, 32). Erec's dwarf, Guivret, functions initially on the first level.[19] As a *persona* independent from Erec, he is a fighter for whom the honour of victory is an end in itself. Interiorized, he incites Erec to undertake the battle in the *Joie* episode, but still functions intermittently as an independent figure, now become gentle and courtly.

The dwarf aspect of the knight tends to be glossed over, ignored or exonerated.[20] It has already been mentioned that Yder is never really punished by Arthur, who does not even acknowledge the presence of the lady and the dwarf before him on this occasion.[21] At Arthur's court Kay represents unmasked belligerence as shown in his unwarranted attack on Erec (3949-4032). He is not reprimanded by Arthur. Until Guivret becomes another thematic dimension of

Erec, he fights anything that moves. He is admired by Arthur (6382-5, 6447-51). Maboagrain is the perfect knight. He would have killed anyone, even his best friend, to oblige his lady (6053-5).[22]

If we consider Maboagrain for the moment, the lady is held by the knight to be responsible for the heads impaled on the stakes (6058-64). There is thus a link between the dwarf and the lady, the second attribute of the knight. Her apparent exterior role is that of the "maiden in distress", or as a symbol of womanhood to be defended. As such, she provides a reason for combat and can be the silent admirer of knightly exploits undertaken for her. Such is the illusion. In fact, the knight and the lady do not act as separate entities at all, each one being an extension of the other's self-image. The lady's beauty is like a mirror reflecting the knight's valour.[23] To doubt or question this beauty is, for Arthur's five hundred knights, tantamount to an attack on the knight's honour and will bring out the "dwarf" in him. The sparrow-hawk contest reflects the situation at Arthur's court. The knight does not really love the lady as a person but as a source of his own renown. She does not exist for him except insofar as she is an excuse for combat. The lady in her turn does not regard the knight as an independent personality. By his continuous proof of prowess, he mirrors her beauty, or her status as a lady. She remains his lady as long as he fights for her and wins. The lady's egocentric use of the knight is implicit in the court dispute and in Yder's combat with Erec. It does not become explicit until the final Joie adventure in the enchanted garden, which can be considered a distillation of Arthurian life.[24] The egocentricity of each couple at Arthur's court isolates them from others, just as Maboagrain and his lady are imprisoned within walls of air. Arthurian love is a devisive force; Arthurian chivalry a destructive one. Since the court consists of people who may rightly be called anti-social, anarchy prevails.

Since Arthur's courtiers live apart from society, and hold their identity by or through another person, they tend to become anonymous. This anonymity is first depicted in the five hundred apparently identical knights with their five hundred ladies, all beautiful, all daughters of kings. Toward the end of the *premiers vers*, the narrator attempts to name the knights present in order of merit. By the tenth, he is in difficulties:

> Gaudeluz soit dismes contez,
> car an lui ot maintes bontez.
> Les autres vos dirai sanz nonbre,
> por ce que li nunbres m'anconbre: (1681-84)

The numbers are getting him down because they are meaningless, the choice for tenth place being arbitrary (*soit*).[25] The irony inherent in the numbering system is more obvious in the juxtaposition of certain names. Next to li Biax Coarz is placed li Lez Hardiz; Mauduiz li Sage is next to Dodins li Sauvages; Yvains li preuz is followed by Yvains li avoutre. Sometimes the comment on the knight is ironic: Tristan, "qui onques ne rist"; Sagremors li Desreez, "cil ne doit pas estre oblïez"; Bedoiers, "qui molt sot d'eschas et de tables". Chrétien, by naming the best of Arthur's knights, is creating life and personality where none had existed before. Except for Gauvain and Erec, the named knights drop back into anonymity once the ceremony of the white stag is completed.[26]

The major figures are also anonymous. Yder's anonymity is as complete as the lady's. Neither he nor his lady speaks, while the dwarf fends off all attempts to identify him. The three are bent on one purpose, the winning of the sparrow-hawk for all time, the eternal fusion into one image of the knight and the lady.[27] Erec's rise to perfection will be accompanied by increasing loss of personal identity. Maboagrain's name is a fiction, for he cannot say by what name he was called before he entered the garden. Although the garden is presented as extratemporal, the impaled heads mark the passage of time and the inevitability of death. Maboagrain's denial of his function or identity within the process of time results in the loss of his past and implies the loss of his future. In *stasis* is death; in the self-created illusion of life *in vacuo* there is partial death, loss of identity. Yder's anonymity is not merely a plot requirement, it is a characteristic of the Arthurian knight.

From Guinevere's point of view, the encounter in the forest with Yder is a confrontation between the as yet unformed Erec and his destiny. She assumes that in order to vanquish Yder, Erec will find a lady whom he will bring back to court. The beauty of the lady will not be contested because Erec will have proven its superiority by armed combat.[28] Thus, Arthur's problem will be solved. Guinevere's assumptions are never explained by the narrator, who leaves it to the reader to interlace the information given concerning the dispute at court, the encounter with Yder, the sparrow-hawk contest at Laluth and Erec's intuitive understanding of Guinevere's assumptions.

d) The Knight Gains a Lady

The sparrow-hawk contest is also a custom, by which the hawk is accorded to the most beautiful damsel provided that her knight is able to win the field against all contenders. As the custom is explained to him by Enide's father, Erec realizes that he must have not only arms but a lady, if he is to avail himself of the custom in order to avenge himself.[29] The battle takes the form of a ritual dance.[30] The verbs are all plural; the two knights are equal, moving in unison; both women are weeping, each praying for the victory of her knight. Yder asks for a respite with businesslike detachment: we should be fighting better than this for our amies; it will soon be dark, so let's take a break and then get on with it. Erec agrees. This pattern with slight variations is repeated in Erec's other major combats, against Guivret and against Maboagrain. Equality and detachment are indications of depersonalized combat, and, by extension, of anonymity. So worthy are the opponents in these cases that none of the victories is clear-cut. This contest ends as Erec pushes over a stunned and reeling adversary.

Enide, "por s'amor et por sa biauté" (911), is a source of renewed strength to Erec during the respite, but the will to win is derived from his recollection that his personal honour is at stake (917-20). His anger is so great that he is prepared to kill the vanquished Yder (985-88), until the latter hastily reminds him of the proper procedure: once defeat is admitted, the victor must not kill his adversary (991-93). Erec in turn gives Yder a courtly lecture: "grant viltance est de ferir fame" (1014).

There is a paradox here. Erec and Yder have fought the battle which Arthur's knights threatened to fight, to "prove" the beauty of a lady.[31] Yet it is only Yder, the loser, who has fought for this reason. Erec was fighting to avenge his honour. He still has a strong sense of personal identity, whereas Yder's "honour" is his lady's beauty. Nonetheless, Erec knows that he must return to court with Enide. He dispatches Yder to Guinevere's "prison" (1024) with a specific message:

> et se li di que ge li mant
> que demain a joie vanrai[32]
> et une pucele an manrai,
> tant bele, et tant saige, et tant preu,
> que sa paroille n'est nul leu; (1034-38)

He rejoices on the way to the court:

> De s'aventure s'esjoïst;
> molt estoit liez de s'avanture,
> qu'amie a bele a desmesure,
> saige et cortoise et de bon aire. (1462-65)

He knows that the queen, not Arthur, is the judge of beauty. Upon arrival he presents Enide to her for approval:

> . . . "Je vos amain,
> dame, ma pucele et m'amie
> de povres garnemanz garnie;
> si com ele me fu donee,
> ensi la vos ai amenee." (1534-38)

Enide's tattered white *chainse* (*de povres garnemanz garnie*) has been the object of discussion since she first appeared:

> La dame s'an est hors issue
> et sa fille, qui fu vestue
> d'une chemise par panz lee,
> deslïee, blanche et ridee;
> un blanc cheinse ot vestu desus,
> n'avoit robe ne mains ne plus
> et tant estoit li chainses viez
> que as costez estoit perciez:
> povre estoit la robe dehors,
> mes desoz estoit biax li cors. (401-10)

Her beauty shines through the "pierced" clothing both figuratively and literally, one gathers. This beauty was made by Nature, the narrator goes on to tell us. God himself could not have done better (411-36). The chainse in this context is indicative of Enide's natural and unembellished beauty. She has not put on the appearance of rank and wealth. The count's niece is prepared to let her have some of her own clothes so that Enide's appearance at court will not be a poor reflection on her uncle, the count (1344-48), but Erec will have none of it (1354-58). He accepts, however, the gift of a palfrey worthy of a king or count, and has it stabled next to his destrier.[33] Erec's insistence that Enide have no other dress until the queen herself shall give her one is linked with his rejection of ties with Laluth. He is carrying Enide back to be crowned queen of beauty in a ceremony which has no rapport with the aspirations of her family.

After Erec presents Enide to Guinevere, he explains that she could have been well dressed, but that he did not wish her to be otherwise robed until the queen had seen her (1551-58). His request for one of the queen's own robes is oblique:

> Ma douce dame, or an pansez,
> car mestier a, bien le veez,
> d'une bele robe avenant. (1559-61)

Guinevere immediately understands and acknowledges Enide's right to the royal clothing (1562-66).

Enide's robing (1567-1652) is similar in length and quantity of detail to Erec's coronation robing (6671-6747), an episode in which Enide plays almost no part at all. In each case the central figure is almost hidden under layers of costly silks, fur linings, goldwork and jewels. In Erec's case, the garments create an illusion of intellectual and political supremacy. In Enide's case, the illusion is one of wealth and nobility.[34] This is Enide's coronation, the receiving of the kiss of the white stag, which confirms her rank as the greatest beauty in the court. She is even wearing a crown of sorts:

> Un cercle d'or ovré a flors
> de maintes diverses colors (1639-40)

This is the destiny for which Erec intended her. She is now officially his lady.

Enide's status as the most beautiful at court implies that Erec is the best knight. Enide is his mirror:

> Ce fu cele por verité
> qui fu fete por esgarder,
> qu'an se poïst an li mirer
> ausi com an un mireor. (438-41)

On their way to Arthur's court, Enide carried with her the sparrow-hawk, her "richesce" (1424), symbol of her beauty. The two gaze at each other in silent admiration. They are two equally "beles ymages":

> Molt estoient igal et per
> de corteisie et de biauté
> et de grant debonereté.
> Si estoient d'une meniere,
> d'unes mors et d'une matiere,
> que nus qui le voir volsist dire
> n'an poïst le meillor eslire
> ne le plus bel ne le plus sage.
> Molt estoient d'igal corage
> et molt avenoient ansanble;
> li uns a l'autre son cuer anble;
> onques deus si beles ymages
> n'asanbla lois ne mariages. (1484-96)

They have become the knight-and-the-lady, as anonymous as when they rode out together to the contest (747-72), but in that case the masculine and feminine roles were clearly defined. At this point, however, the melding into one identity strips Erec of knightly characteristics. After the contest, Erec described Enide as bele, saige and preu (1037). The absence of preu in this case and the use of adjectives primarily employed up to now to describe Enide (537-40) can be taken at face value to describe the gentleness of this idyllic moment. We may infer also that Erec's recréantise has begun. He sees in Enide the source and reflection of his perfection. He does not have to strive for anything more. He has the lady, but not the dwarf. In Arthurian terms, he has only arrived by half.

The Wedding and the Crisis

Bezzola was quite right to suggest that, as far as Erec was concerned, the marriage was a mistake. For Enide, however, marriage to Erec is the fulfillment of her destined role in life.[35]

In the premiers vers, Chrétien establishes what Enide's attitude toward her wifely duties will be. Tongue-in-cheek, he describes in great detail how Enide looks after Erec's horse while Erec and her father stand in the courtyard doing nothing (451-68). In no other romance will Chrétien speak of a woman as a good host to a horse:

> Or a li chevax molt boen oste;
> molt bien et bel s'an antremet; (462-3)

Having played the groom, Enide now plays the maid, ushering Erec into the house to sit down (469-76). She herself arms Erec for the combat (708-26), and when the time comes to leave for the contest, she is already mounted and ready to go (qui de rien ne *s'an fist proier*, 741). Chrétien has already given us a miniature of the idle life at her uncle's castle (348-60), where women make themselves beautiful while boys look after the horses (358-60). Enide will have difficulty in reconciling her two roles: *amie*, with which she has never been familiar, and *femme*, which in her mind consists of active participation in the life of her husband. Where Enide does not understand her role, she is late (for the departure *an avanture*, for the coronation) or passive (for her robing ceremony); where her love for her husband makes her wifely duty unequivocal, she is prompt to act, as shown in her outwitting the count who proposed to murder Erec, or in her verbal assault on Guivret, following the second Guivret encounter. The interminable monologues of the first series of adventures indicate her confusion as she attempts to obey commands which are meaningless to her; she must overcome the instinct to obey in order to do her duty as she understands it. To speak in modern terms, one could say that, like a robot programmed for obedience and service, she short-circuits when the two seem mutually exclusive. The count de Limors asks whether she is Erec's *fame* or amie. She answers:

> "L'un et l'autre, fet ele, sire;
> tel duel ai ne vos sai que dire,
> mes moi poise quant ne sui morte." (4651-53)

This is not, as is generally assumed, the expression of an ideal relationship,[36] but the lament of a woman who has failed to reconcile her two roles, with the result that her husband is lying apparently dead at her feet.

At the time of the wedding, no problems are foreseen by either Erec or Enide. The wedding is a joyful occasion which reveals Enide's first emergence from passivity. She is named on her wedding day, thus achieving an identity for the first time. In fact the wedding service is distilled into Enide's being named and blessed by the Archbishop of Canterbury:

> Quant Erec sa fame reçut
> par son droit non nomer l'estut,
> qu'altremant n'est fame esposee,
> se par son droit non n'est nomee.
> Ancor ne savoit l'an son non,
> mes ore primes le set l'on:
> Enyde ot non au baptestire.
> L'arcevesques de Quantorbire,
> qui a la cort venuz estoit,
> la benef, si com il doit. (1973-82)

As a lady, Enide could remain anonymous. As a wife, she has a distinct identity. The wedding service receives no other mention, but the wedding night, on the other hand, is described at length with a masterful combination of sensuality and discretion. Joy has accompanied the celebration (1987, 1994, 1995, 2015), but the author leaves the joy of the guests to devote himself to "la joie et le delit qui fu an la chambre et el lit" (2017-18). Enide is not timid on this first night:

> De l'amor qui est antr'ax deus
> fu la pucele plus hardie;
> de rien ne s'est acoardie,
> tot sofri, que qu'il li grevast;
> encois qu'ele se relevast,
> ot perdu le non de pucele;
> au matin fu dame novele. (2048-54)

Enide is now *dame novele*. She has lost one name (*le non de pucele*), and gained another which has no social status at Arthur's court. Chrétien has indicated the ambiguity of her relationship to Erec in three separate references to the Tristan legend.

> Por voir vos di qu'Isolz la blonde
> n'ot les crins tant sors ne luisanz
> que a cesti ne fust neanz. (424-6)

Enide is compared to and surpasses Iseut.

> Onques, ce cuit, tel joie n'ot
> quant Tristanz ocist le Morhot,
> qu'an l'isle Saint Sanson vainqui,
> con l'an feisoit d'Erec iqui. (1241-44)[37]

The Yder-Morholt comparison must be ironic, since, on the narrative level, Yder is not nearly as fearful an opponent as Morholt.[38] For the same reason, the Erec-Tristan comparison may be considered ironic use of hyperbole. More important, however, is the use of Morholt to recall Tristan's first meeting with Iseut, whom he would later take back to Cornwall as future wife of the king. Iseut was to be amie and femme, but not to the same man. Enide is similarly destined to be amie to Erec and femme to li filz Lac. The third passage refers to the wedding night:

> A cele premiere asanblee,
> la ne fu pas Enyde anblee,
> ne Brangiens an leu de li mise; (2021-23)

Enide needs no Brangain. Her husband and her lover are the same man but, ironically, she will still have to assume a double role, as did Iseut.

The guest list further substantiates the notion that the wedding is not conventional.[39] The parents of the bride and groom are not invited. This omission cannot be overlooked since Chrétien has devoted much attention to Erec's fulfillment of his promise to Enide's parents. Sumptuous gifts are taken to them in Laluth and they are accompanied by messengers to Lac's kingdom, where they are warmly welcomed by the old king because of the love he bears his son (1851). The parents represent conventional society joined together by variously interwoven bonds of love or affection and mutual interest. This society, in which the family is the fundamental unit, has been studiously excluded from the wedding. Family at Arthur's court is simply a matter of lineage, and the nobility of the guests invited is stressed (1874-6, 1882-3, 1911-12). Marriage plays no part in this anti-social court, where the only married couple is never referred to as husband and wife, only as king and queen. The guests are all men, or perhaps rather some male phenomenon, since their strangeness becomes increasingly apparent as the long list progresses (1884-1962). The first on the list is a count who leads a hundred horses in his right hand. A certain Moloas comes from a land where storms, toads and snakes are unknown and the temperature is always just right. Guingamars is there, the lover of Morgant la fee, "et ce fu veritez provee" (1908).[40] The list concludes with three groups, one composed entirely of very young men bearing hunting birds (1922-32), the next of very old men, held very dear by Arthur (1933-40), and the last of dwarfs, also well esteemed by Arthur "car molt estoient gentil home" (1959).[41] These are Arthur's subjects, unreal and timeless, his fairy people, immortal in their youth and age.[42] Arthur's court has become a place of childhood dreams, a haven for those who do not want to grow up. The marriage takes place then in a world divorced from the very idea of marriage as a useful social institution.

The premiers vers would be a completed story in itself, were it not for the promise of marriage still to be fulfilled.[43] The marriage is outside the framework of the knight-lady adventure of the first part both structurally and thematically. Its position at the onset of the continuation of the narrative makes it seem a bridge between the Arthurian world of the premiers vers and the outside world of royal responsibility, as if Erec's return home as "novel seignor" (2315) were the hoped-for conclusion to the entire adventure. Chrétien is playing with genre. He has made the troubadour distinction between the premiers vers[44] of idyllic joy in love and the trials and tribulations which follow. He then glosses over the first distinction to follow the tradition of the adventuring hero's triumphant return to society: Erec speaks of "my country" (2218, 2224), and of Enide as his wife (2225, 2238, 2251) whom he now commands (2238); he leaves as a prince, royally escorted, his wife riding behind him; the return home rings with joy (2282, 2299, 2313, 2316, 2396, 2398), the joy of a loving father welcoming home a beloved son and a cherished daughter-in-law (2294-2304), the joy of a people receiving their future king (2313-17). This phase proves to be no more conclusive than the first, since Erec immediately lapses into a state of profound otium, abandoning the kingdom to his father and chivalric deeds to his knights:

> Mes tant l'ama Erec d'amors,
> que d'armes mes ne li chaloit,
> ne a tornoiemant n'aloit.
> N'avoit mes soing de tornoier:
> a sa fame volt dosnoier,
> si an fist s'amie et sa drue; (2430-35)

The rhyme tournoier-dosnoier is evocative. Erec has shifted from one field of action to another and has, in his own mind, annulled the marriage. The marriage then has failed to bridge the two worlds. It is now manifestly counterfeit, just as the references to the Tristan legend and the curious guest list indicated it might be. It is the cause of the trials and tribulations which follow the premiers vers, notwithstanding the tournament and the triumphant return home.

Erec's abrupt laying down of arms is not consistent with his brilliant success in the tournament unless one assumes that he gave a two day virtuoso performance simply in order to create such an impression of perfection that he might honourably leave the court and enjoy his wife in peace. The conclusion must be that although Erec seems a perfect knight, he has no real interest in feats of arms. Indeed, Chrétien skilfully sets up the distinction between the fact of Erec's accomplishments and the fiction of his perfection as a knight. Onlookers are amazed at Erec's performance (2156-58). None would believe it who had not seen it (2201-2203). Narrative emphasis moves from the event itself to what is said of the event:

> d'anbedeus parz trestuit disoient
> qu'il avoit le tornoi veincu
> par sa lance et par son escu.
> Or fu Erec de tel renon
> qu'an ne parloit se de lui non; (2204-8)

Then hyperbolic clichés joined by the key verb sanbler create total illusion of renon (2207):

nus hom n'avoit si boene grace
qu'il *sanbloit* Ausalon de face
et de la lengue Salemon,
et de fierté *sanbla* lyon,
et de doner et de despandre
refu il parauz Alixandre. (2209-14)

Erec now *seems* at the summit of knightly perfection, and he immediately asks leave to go home (2215-22). Subsequent references to his homeland and his wife are a smokescreen, an excuse to get away. Erec has used rank to abscond with Enide just as he used it to obtain her from her father in the first place.

Enide is not aware that she is now *amie*. She considers herself a wife, personally involved where her husband's diminishing reputation is concerned, but bound to subservience. She hides her distress at the rumours of his *recréantise* for fear of annoying her *sire* (2459-68). Finally, one morning she gazes at the sleeping Erec and utters the fateful words:

"Lasse, fet ele, con mar fui!
de mon païs que ving ça querre?
Bien me doit essorbir la terre,
quant toz li miaudres chevaliers,
li plus hardiz et li plus fiers,
qui onques fust ne cuens ne rois,
li plus lëax, li plus cortois,
a del tot an tot relanquie
por moi tote chevalerie.
Dons l'ai ge honi tot por voir;
nel volsisse por nul avoir."
    Lors li dist: "Amis, con mar fus!"
A tant se tot, si ne dist plus. (2492-2504)

Enide's deep sense of personal shame is unwarranted. No one has blamed her. On the contrary, she is highly esteemed. Chrétien's customary signal, the reference to kings and counts, indicates that Enide, too, has been taken in by appearances. She assumes her guilt willingly, because she refuses to admit that Erec is not the great knight she thought him to be. Short minutes later, however, she will state that she has been blamed, but she will show no docile acceptance of guilt (2552-61). Between the two speeches, Enide recognizes the truth about Erec. That is why she shifts from self-pity (con mar fui) to pity for him (con mar fus). The use of the familiar "tu" is indicative of her disillusionment. This form is never used between the two even in their closest moments.[45] Erec, surfacing from his sleep, hears the last words and is stung by the condescension with which he is addressed as ami.[46] Erec reacts as if to a knightly challenge. In his mind, Enide is not speaking to him as a wife but as an Arthurian amie; she has turned on him, negating the renown he gained for her at Arthur's court.[47] He feels betrayed and responds with anger, not towards the amie who might have the right to rebuke him, but towards the wife who has no rights whatsoever. He demands an explanation which he does not really want because he already knows the answer. Calling her "dolce amie chiere" (2511) and "ma dolce amie" (2515) does not hide the tone of threat in his interrogation. He abandons "amie" for "dame" (2524) as he becomes openly menacing (2532-35). Unable to lie her way out of the situation, Enide speaks her mind very bluntly. "Vostre pris est molt abessiez" (2544), she says in the first part of her speech. She continues by telling him how this affects her: she does not like hearing him spoken of in this manner, and she does not like being blamed for his recréantise (2552-61). He had better do something about it because for her part she has had enough of listening to such talk (2562-65). She ends up by explaining the attempted concealment of her misery. She did not dare show it: "Onques nel vos osai mostrer" (2566).

Erec's answer to this vigorous and rebellious outburst is made with deadly calm:

> -Dame, fet il, droit an eüstes,
> et cil qui m'an blasment ont droit.
> (2572-3)

Erec has no doubt that those who blame him for recréantise are right; he knows that he has tried to escape his duty as an Arthurian knight. "You were right" excludes Enide from the category of those who blame him and whose criticism he accepts. It seems to refer rather to the previous lines, in which Enide explains her fear of speaking out.[48] In this context it can only mean, "You were right, you should not have spoken out." This interpretation is borne out by Erec's subsequent punishment of his wife, the constant admonition to remain silent. Now, decked out in her best clothes, on her best horse, she is to become his lady while he proves to her alone how great a knight he really is. No tournaments this time, but the supreme test, avanture, perhaps in response to her demand that he find a way to regain his "premier los" (2564). Erec is now prepared to use his power as a husband to force his wife to become once more his lady, the acquiescent admirer of his valour.

The duality of roles on either side is made very clear. Enide's dress and her palfrey (onques meillor n'ot cuens ne rois, 2616) recall her robing as amie and her position as bride of the future king. Erec arms himself in an elaborate ceremony. On the first occasion he was armed by Enide (709-26) in her father's armour. Now he seats himself upon the "ymage" of a leopard[49] and puts on strange and wonderful armour. The links cannot be cut (2636). They are made of silver (2641) and the coat of mail is as light as a silk garment (2643-48). Among these qualities which make the armour seem almost magic is inserted a feature of incongruous pragmatism: it will not rust (2640). Or perhaps this is an ironic intimation of immortality and quite in keeping with the rest. Whichever way the author intended this detail to be interpreted, the arms are symbolic of the knightly perfection which Erec hopes to attain. They are, however, only apparently indestructible. The silver links break (3765). So battered are they by the end of the adventures that King Evrain will have to provide others for the Joie episode. Supposedly Erec's defense or protection, they cause him to fall into a death-like trance (4552-55). Thus the extraordinary proves in the course of time to be quite ordinary. Erec, believing in the indestructibility of the armour, believes himself invulnerable, an almost fatal error. The symbol performs two functions. On the narrative level, the arms symbolize "la haute valeur chevaleresque".[50] On the ironic level, they symbolize Erec's belief that the ideal is attainable this side of death.

Erec's ritualistic arming establishes his identity as a knight in search of renown. Enide's best dress, put on at his command, establishes her position as lady. Simultaneously, however, Erec has become an overbearing husband. He has Enide sent for quite peremptorily (2661-67). Lac and all the knights come running, the latter offering to accompany the couple. Erec refuses:

> mes il lor jure et acreante
> qu'il n'an manra ja conpaignon,
> se sa fame solemant non.
> Ensi dit qu'il en ira *seus*; (2688-91)[51]

With his wife, Erec considers himself alone, a foreshadowing of the ever-increasing efforts Erec will make to detach himself from his wife and to deny her any identity beyond that which he will bestow upon her as *amie*, a silent admirer. His father tries in vain to make his son see his duties as "filz de roi" (2706).

> Erec respont a la parsome,
> et li conte tot; et devise
> comant il a sa voie anprise: (2712-14)

The narrator thus insists that Erec is being open and honest with his father whereas in fact Erec explains nothing. Further, he attempts to deceive his father by indicating that he is aware of his princely duties, while remaining steadfast in his resolution:

> ne conpaignie ne demant,
> fors de ma fame seulemant. (2719-20)

He is setting out just as he did from Laluth:

> ne conpaignie ne queroit
> fors que s'amie solemant. (1432-33)

At Laluth, he separated Enide from her parents and her past. Now he cuts himself off from his father, from his own ties to the past and to the future. He makes the first steps toward the anonymity of the perfection he seeks. His concern for his wife, should she become a widow, and for his knights, is merely part of the smokescreen. Erec has no intention of being killed. He is filled with confidence as he sets out to fulfill his destiny.

> Erec s'an va, sa fame an moinne,
> ne set ou, mes en avanture. (2762-3)

The anomaly of his situation is distilled in these two lines. The more Erec refers to his wife as fame, the more irresponsible his behaviour as husband appears. The last thing a knight and prince should do is needlessly expose his wife to the dangers of the adventurous life.

The Adventures

Guivret is the thematic pivot of the first series of adventures. He is one aspect of Erec's quest, the dwarf-figure representing combat for the sake of honour. Although in Erec's view the amie should embody this concept by mirroring honour achieved, Enide resists the role of amie and remains an active participant in his chivalric deeds. Until the Guivret episode, Erec is protected either by Enide or by some feeling of fair play on the part of his adversaries. The robber knights fight one by one (2822-26, 2951-53).[52] The count calls off his men out of a sudden esteem for Enide and, by extension, for Erec. Against Guivret, Erec's only protection is his own skill and force.

A gradation can be observed in the motivation of the adversaries: the first set of knights wanted plunder; the second wanted Enide, the destriers led by Enide, and the defeat of Erec to obtain his horse and arms, that is to say, the external trappings of knighthood, symbolic of a knight's renown.[53] These encounters recall the tournament in which knights and horses were taken as symbols of victory, although Erec did not at first do so. Here it is no game. Erec massacres the robbers, takes their horses and also a lance to replace one he broke in the battle. This detail indicates the methodical ruthlessness of his behaviour.

At this point, the object coveted becomes more personal, but at the same time more abstract. The count wants Erec's wife, not only out of lust, but also for personal enhancement, just as Erec himself wanted her. The count of Limors will covet Enide for the same reasons (4714-28), and will in fact marry her, thus symbolically relieving Erec of his wife, while leaving him the amie. Guivret, in his turn, wants to "steal" Erec's honour, to make him recréant. Because Erec is trespassing on Guivret's property precisely because he too is out to "steal" honour and gain renown, they are an evenly matched pair.

This last combat is similar to the Yder battle. The knights move in unison, their horses fall in unison, their equality is clear:

> que nus hom an nule meniere
> certainnemant n'aparceüst
> le quex le meillor en eüst. (3798-3800)

Erec's final success is due more to luck than to skill. Guivret's sword breaks. In victory, Erec is coldly dispassionate. He wants a full admission of defeat (3827-31). Guivret for a moment cannot bring himself to this dishonour, but submits when he thinks that the alternative is death:

> Quant Erec le vit delaier,
> por lui fere plus esmaier
> li ra une anvaïe fete:
> sore li cort espee trete, . . . (3832-36)

Erec did not threaten in anger; it was a gesture calculated to inspire fear.

There is, however, some pride left in Guivret. In telling Erec his name, he boasts of his wealth and power and in the same breath expresses the wish to become Erec's friend. Erec boasts of his own pedigree and power in return:

> Erec respont: "Je me revant
> que je sui assez gentix hom:
> Erec, filz le roi Lac, ai non." (3858-60)

His father's wealth and power are exceeded by none except, of course, Arthur's:

> "celui an ost je voiremant,
> car a lui nus ne s'aparoille."
> Quant Guivrez l'ot, molt s'an mervoille,
> et dist: "Sire, grant mervoille oi; (3866-69)

Guivret is impressed. There is humour in the repetition of mervoille. There is irony in the exception made of Arthur, just as there was earlier, when Arthur acclaimed Erec his best knight except for Gauvain (a celui ne se prenoit nus, 2233). On one level, it is fact: obviously no one can equal either Arthur or Gauvain, because each represents an aspect of perfection. On another level, the perfection is illusory, since it relies upon the fiction of illustriousness which emanates from the court. The audience knows that Erec is in search of that illusory perfection; this knowledge heightens the effect of the word mervoille.

Guivret offers to put everything he owns at Erec's disposal. This time he proposes that Erec will be sire as opposed to the previous offer of friendship (3872-77). Erec refuses Guivret's invitation to his castle, where they might receive medical attention, but adds:

> "mes itant solemant vos pri
> que, se nus besoinz m'avenoit
> et la novele a vos venoit
> que j'eüsse mestier d'aïe,
> adonc ne m'oblïessiez mie." (3886-90)

Guivret pledges to help him if ever need should arise (3891-95). Erec is content:

> -Ja plus ne vos quier demander,
> fet Erec, molt m'avez promis;
> mes sire estes et mes amis,
> se l'uevre est tex con la parole." (3896-9)

Each one is now sire and ami to the other. The last line (3899) is a saying, a dicton, of which the converse will be the case: Guivret will arrive too late to help and, with the best of intentions, will nearly kill his friend and lord. The pact is sealed by a mutual embrace:

> Li uns l'autre beise et acole;
> onques de si dure bataille
> ne fu si dolce dessevraille,
> que par amor et par franchise
> chascuns, des panz de sa chemise,
> trancha bandes longues et lees,
> s'ont lor plaies antre bandees. (3900-6)

The two men are "bound" together in bonds of love and loyalty. Erec has found someone to look after him in case he should need help. Enide is no longer necessary as a helper or even as an inspiration to her knight. We last saw her as a despairing onlooker:

> Enyde, qui les esgardoit,
> a po de duel ne forssenoit.
> Qui li veïst son grant duel fere,
> ses poinz tordre, ses chevox trere,
> et les lermes des ialz cheoir,
> leal dame poïst veoir;
> et trop fust fel qui la veïst,
> se granz pitiez ne l'an preïst. (3787-94)

But, in fact, nobody did see the loyal lady. She was totally ignored; nor does she return to the narrative until the two are seen by Kay. In Erec's mind she has ceased to exist both as *fame* and as *amie*.

Enide brought this upon herself because she remained unaware of Erec's intentions and of his deceptions. Immediately following the crisis she understood that she was to be sent away, a fitting punishment since she saw herself the cause of Erec's *recréantise* and an obstacle to his success (2585-99). Told that she was to accompany Erec, she was at a complete loss to understand (2676-80). Her confusion is manifest in her monologues, which form an essential part of the repeated pattern: Erec tells her to ride ahead in silence; at the sight of impending danger she inwardly debates her position arriving with greater or lesser delay at the conclusion that Erec dead will be a greater grief to her than any punishment he may inflict upon her; she speaks; he reprimands her for her lack of confidence in him and her disobedience, and at the outset says he will pardon her "this time". In fact, he does not pardon her.

She has interfered with his knightly prerogatives, therefore she must care for the symbols of knighthood, the horses. When he tells her to sleep, she refuses and must spend the night awake, looking after horses and husband. Punishments and threats have no effect. Enide remains fixed in her duty, the only way in which she can express her love, thereby thwarting the knight who is determined to show his love by independent knightly action. Frustrated, he begins to disassociate himself from her.

Enide is unable to see through Erec's deceptions. From the second robber episode, it is clear that Erec is feigning not to see the enemy. After the count episode, he is absolutely sure of his wife's love and loyalty, and the reader is informed that his anger and threats are feigned also.[54] But the pattern continues until Guivret is defeated. Enide sees her punishment as merited because she spoke the words which drove her husband out of bed and onto his horse. She believes he hates her (2785-88) and he gives her reason to think so (2993-3006). She does, in fact, doubt his ability to cope with the attackers at first (2829-39), but by the end of the two robber episodes, she is sure that Erec can handle anything (3104-09). In short, if Erec only knew it, she sees him exactly as he wishes to be seen. Her problem lies in her inability to be the mute abstraction Erec wishes her to be.

Communication has failed. Enide's repeated warnings to Erec do not tell him anything he does not already know about the oncoming adversaries. The act of speaking, on the other hand, invariably communicates to him her lack of faith in him as a knight and her love for him, which is independent of his knighthood. Neither is acceptable. Love must be bestowed by the lady in proportion to her admiration for the way in which her knight acts out his role. Erec is imposing silence and destroying understanding by pretence. He is depersonalizing them both, rendering them abstractions beyond the reach of or the need for communication.

Just as communication breaks down between Erec and Enide, the narrator creates a similar baffle between the action of the narrative and the reader. He claims truth to have been spoken, explanations made, episodes recounted whereas, in fact, nothing of the kind takes place. Erec did not explain his departure to his father. Kay neglects to tell Arthur that he has attacked a grievously wounded man, although the narrator claims the truth told and nothing concealed (4052-53). Erec's supposedly complete account of his adventures to Arthur is abridged (6417-19). The narrator's misleading claims tend to deceive the reader just as Erec's deceptions of Enide make her unable to see the truth. Accepting the genre tradition that the knight is wise and noble, the narrator does his best to make Erec's behaviour conform to the mold. Only once, at a complete loss to understand the situation, he accuses Erec of folly (4968-9). As a general rule, he refrains from adverse comment on Erec's actions, observing the silence which Erec attempts to impose upon his wife. Only in silence can the illusion be maintained. His attitude towards Enide is entirely dependent upon Erec's feelings of pleasure or displeasure at her conduct. At the end of the quarrel between the two, he emerges from a withdrawn and neutral position to equate Enide metaphorically with a goat, by means of the proverb "tant grate chievre que mal gist" (2584). The count episode shows most clearly the narrator's predicament, as Erec becomes increasingly detached from his wife.

Following the defeat of the robber-knights, the couple spend the night in the woods. In the morning, they set off again with Enide in the lead (3117). We assume that Enide is still managing the horses. The count's squire comes out toward them, shows no astonishment but rather the utmost courtesy, offering them food so that they will not have to leave the path.[55] Later, we discover that the squire in fact saw Erec leading the horses (3234-38). Erec is, according to appearances, suddenly behaving as a knight and husband should. He has ceased to punish his wife overtly, in a manner which might be subject to criticism by others they meet, but while the appearances are being observed, he is withdrawing from his role as husband, leaving Enide to defend them both.

The reader has become increasingly aware of Enide as the lure for adventure and the potential victim of the adventure. Our awareness creates ironic contrast with Erec's unawareness.[56]

However, the count is not drawn to Erec's lodging because of Enide or because of Erec's valour, but because he cannot believe his squire who claims that Erec's beauty surpasses his own (3218-46). Erec is meanwhile enjoying the luxury "to which he is accustomed" (3256-59). The scene is set for a contest in the material and sensual comforts which wealth and rank may offer. Both are courteous (3262-65). The contest takes place on a soft white couch:

> acointié se sont anbedui
> sor une coute blanche et mole;
> s'antre acointierent de parole. (3266-68)

They are vying with words, not deeds. The count offers to pay for Erec's lodging. Erec indicates he can well afford to pay his expenses. As the two men chat of many things, the count's attention is drawn to Enide. The two men, having proven themselves equal in material comforts, now engage in a "beauty" contest, beauty clearly symbolic of sensuality.[57] Burning with love, the count asks Erec's permission to speak with Enide. His constant reassurances of good faith are immediately recognized by the reader as spurious. The narrator's hint that the count is speaking "covertemant" (3285) is therefore superfluous. He purports to give the audience an advantage which Erec does not have and therefore justify Erec's bland detachment. This technique verges on the burlesque:

Erec ne fu mie jalous,
que il n'i pansa nule boise:
"Sire, fet il, pas ne me poise.
Joer et parler vos i loist;
ne cuidiez pas que il m'an poist,
volantiers congié vos an doing."
La dame seoit de lui loing
tant con deus lances ont de lonc, . . .
(3296-3303)

It would seem that Erec's lack of jealousy is not feigned, and that this is not an intended test of loyalty or obedience or love. The word *joer* could mean anything from enjoying Enide's company to taking her off to bed. The addition of *et parler* limits the possibilities present in Erec's mind. If we can believe the narrator, he is simply attempting to outdo the count in courtesy. Enide's position two lance lengths away evokes not only the psychological distance between the two, but the new terrain of the contest. The count is shifting to what he observes to be Erec's vulnerable side:

"bien voi et sai que vostre sire
ne vos ainme ne ne vos prise;
a boen seignor seriez prise
se vos avoec moi remenez." (3322-25)

He offers Enide everything Erec offered her: wealth, noble rank, the position of amie and dame. Enide's response has nothing to do with love. She will not betray her seignor. This is a chivalric reaction; she is not as vulnerable as the count thought. He becomes angry:

> "Bien est voirs que fame s'orguelle,
> quant l'an plus la prie et losange;
> mes qui la honist et leidange,
> cil la trueve meillor sovant." (3342-45)

The count, like de Limors, is an Erec-figure in so far as his pretensions as husband and lover are concerned. All three desire an obedient wife, a compliant mistress and a decorative ornament. All three offer Enide the same advantages.[58] All three abuse her when she proves an obstacle rather than an amenity. The proverb above sums up the philosophy of all three, for whom courtly procedures serve only to mask ignoble motives. The conversation between Enide and the count thus reveals all that has been base in Erec's own actions but because we are dealing with the nefarious count and not with Erec, the narrator is free to criticize.

Enide's mock capitulation is divided into two parts. She first expresses concern for her reputation and then proposes a plot to protect it: the count shall seize her by force the next morning, cutting down Erec as he tries to defend her. Between the two parts, the narrator uses a proverb to tell us that Enide is not telling the truth: "Ce panse cuers que ne dit boche" (3376). There is simple irony in telling the audience what it already knows. The humour is complex if one considers that the proverb is applied to the one person in the romance whose forthright speech and basic honesty have never been doubted. Enide requests and receives a vow of good faith from the count, who pledges "lëaumant come cuens" (3403). The narrator takes pains to point out that Enide does not in fact value this pledge, esteeming it to be of little worth, nor would she have had any part in this deception except to save her husband (3407-13). With regard to Enide, the narrator protests too much; with regard to Erec, he is the naïve onlooker, pious, hopeful and, for the most part, restrained:

> Erec de ce rien ne savoit
> qu'il deüssent sa mort pleidier,
> mes Dex li porra bien aidier,

> et je cuit que si fera il.
> Or est Erec an grant peril
> et si ne cuide avoir regart;
> molt est li cuens de male part,
> qui sa fame tolir li panse
> et lui ocirre sanz desfanse.
> Come fel prant a lui congié:
> "A Deu, fet il, vos comant gié."
> Erec respont: "Sire, et je vos." (3418-29)

The narrator has erased Enide's efforts to save Erec and replaced them with faith in God. He emphasizes the villainy of the count towards Erec, but nowhere suggests any impropriety in the count's behaviour toward Enide. Chrétien has used direct discourse throughout to show the narrator's bias. His own ironic comment on the narrator's hope for divine protection is made as the count and Erec commend each other to God, each one as undeserving as the other.

That night, Erec sleeps well, *seüremant* (3454). His wife is watching over him. But he sleeps too long (3453-5) and she must awaken him once more. The narrator sings her praise (3458-60) as Erec himself recognizes her great loyalty (3480-81). Since the narrator's function is in general to present Erec's point of view, and with sympathy, Enide's thoughts must be expressed in the monologues, for she can communicate with Erec or the reader in no other way. She is as isolated from the narrator as she is from Erec.

We have commented on the similarities of the two count episodes. The differences are also pertinent. The first victory is Enide's. The second is Erec's. Erec really does very little in the first adventure. He kills one fully armed man and wounds the count, who is armed only with lance and shield (3582-5). He runs from the remaining ninety-nine men, unaware that they are not pursuing him. The count has called them back, recognizing the whole exploit as a "malveise oeuvre" (3622). He repents:

> esploitié ai vilainnemant:
> de ma vilenie me poise;
> molt est preuz et saige et cortoise
> la dame qui deceü m'a.
> La biautez de li m'aluma:
> Por ce que ge la desiroie,
> son seignor ocirre voloie
> et li par force retenir;
> bien m'an devoit max avenir,
> sor moi an est venuz li max,
> que fos feisoie et deslëax
> et traïtes et forssenez.
> Onques ne fu de mere nez
> miaudres chevaliers de cestui; (3630-43)

Enide, "preuz et saige et cortoise", has been given knightly attributes. Her chivalric example makes the count aware of the baseness of his actions.

The recognition of Erec's value is ironic, because it is a transference of the esteem which the count feels for Enide. Erec's prowess in the field was not so extraordinary that he should be considered the best knight ever born of woman. Only Enide's display of courage in saving Erec permits the count to assume Erec's greatness as a knight. The generic conventions have been reversed. Whereas the lady is supposed to reflect the perfection of the knight in her beauty, Erec's "beauty" or recréantise has obliged Enide to display the chivalric quality of courage which in turn makes Erec the mirror image of her perfection. This is a defeat for Erec in terms of his concept of the roles they should be playing. The passive voice of the narrator's final comment indicates that if he cannot give credit to Erec, he will not give credit to Enide: "Einsi est Erec delivrez" (3652). The relationship between the couple is as strained as ever (3508-13, 3538-60). The second count episode, which concludes with the reconciliation, accomplishes Erec's fondest wish: he rescues Enide without any wifely interference and the lady is, at the time of the rescue, the wife of the adversary. In other words, at the second try at what might be considered essentially the same adventure, Erec wins Enide as amie, causes her to leave behind her identity as wife and thus re-creates the relationship he enjoyed after the sparrow-hawk adventure and before the marriage. Ironically, the second count adventure reveals an even lesser feat of prowess on Erec's part: de Limors was totally unarmed and unprepared for the blow which killed him.

One further parallel between the two episodes deserves consideration at this point. Both involve an "awakening". In the first instance the wounded count faints, but nonetheless hears his men determined to track down Erec to kill him:

> et les ialz un petitet oevre;
> bien aparçoit que malveise oevre
> avoit ancomanciee a faire. (3621-3)

The count has awakened to the truth about himself, about his motives, about Enide. It is generally assumed that Erec's awakening before he kills de Limors is of the same nature because of the reconciliation which follows.[59] Such is not the case, as will be discussed later. Erec awakes to Arthurian perfection, that is, to illusion. His sleep, from which Enide awakened him with her tears, and which he has been enjoying nightly up to this point, represents his recréantise as an Arthurian knight, while his wife watches over his chivalry.[60] Essentially this form of recréantise is simply unwillingness to fight. The meaning is extended by the robber-knights and Guivret to include defeat (2800-2, 3671-80). The wounds which Guivret inflicted upon Erec nearly resulted in the ultimate recréantise of death, notwithstanding Erec's victory. After the second encounter between the two, Erec has lost his identity as son of Lac and husband to Enide. He rises as Erec-Enide-Guivret,[61] three in one, absolute Arthurian perfection, ready to undertake battle against a knight who, like himself, has chosen the penultimate solution: that of opting out of society altogether. Erec's victory over Maboagrain releases the latter from the bondage of the illusion, from continuous combat and victory. Within the enchanted garden death becomes the ultimate goal of Erec's quest. From this destiny he is saved by the vanquished knight who makes him blow the horn and destroy the illusion.

Between Erec's initial _recréantise_ and that which is set up as the goal of his quest, there might have been a turning point away from illusion and back to reality had he experienced a real awakening such as that of the count, had he only listened to the vavasour extolling the intelligence of Enide as worth more than her beauty, to his father instructing him in his responsibilities as prince, and most of all to Enide who could have been for him, as she was to the count, a point of contact with inner and outer reality. This moment is lost as Erec flees onward between the hedgerows toward Guivret's drawbridge.

The adversaries have been increasingly numerous up to this point but Guivret is alone and yet proves to be Erec's most dangerous adversary in spite of his diminutive size (_qu'il estoit molt de cors petiz_, 3665). High up in his tower, he sees Erec cross the bridge _isnelemant_:

> Isnelemant passent[62] le pont,
> mes molt orent alé petit
> quant de la tor a mont le vit
> cil qui de la tor estoit sire. (3660-63)

Erec is suspended in mid-stride while Guivret descends and makes preparations for combat (3667-88). Suddenly Guivret is thundering down on them, pebbles shattering up from his horse's hooves like sparks from a fire. Equally suddenly this demoniac figure of noise and motion is stilled and silenced by Enide's trance-like paralysis of fear, ostensibly of Guivret but also of Erec. She grits her teeth to prevent any speech from passing her lips as she debates her decision within herself. When the debate is resolved in the usual way, time resumes: the two knights clash at the head of that same bridge which Erec crossed some one hundred lines before. Enide has always slowed down time for her debates. Time stopped altogether for Erec after the Yder combat until the defeated knight completed his mission at Arthur's court, when the narrative returned to Erec, still standing in the square:

> Or redevons d'Erec parler,
> qui ancore an la place estoit
> ou la bataille fete avoit. (1238-40)

In that first half-day reduced to a moment, Enide became an interiorized extension of Erec. During their return to Arthur's court, they are lost in admiration for each other, each seeing his own image reflected back from the other in silent timelessness (1466-96). Silence is thus established early in the romance as an essential quality of the knight-lady relationship. Enide's debates are a confrontation between the silence of the *amie* and the speech of the wife. In this last struggle, the wife wins but capitulates. Enide does not interfere again. The role of *amie* now dominates, but it is too late, for Erec has put her out of his mind altogether.[63] Although victory has consistently been his, Erec has not really won. He has lost contact with both the dwarf and the lady, and is close to death. The adventurous forest opens and enfolds him. Within its precincts, he will find the qualifying adventure.

To allow the unwilling Erec re-entry into Arthur's court, the fiction of the hunt is recreated. The narrator tells us that Erec has come to a forest full of game (3914-19), and that Arthur has come to spend three or four days there "por lui deduire et deporter" (3925). The hunt exists only in Erec's mind (4491-2), although perhaps he too has some doubt that the quarry was in fact game. It must be something else if Gauvain has been riding fully armed (3928-36). The king is not doing anything; he is sitting in his tent, where he is joined by the weary Gauvain, who would seem to have had no success. Kay is not so humiliated by his encounter with Erec that he does not tell of the unknown knight he has met. Arthur dispatches Gauvain to bring him back amfablemant (4058), admonishing him not to fail (4060-62). Kay has already told the unknown knight that he will be joyfully and honourably received (3984-88). Gauvain offers a polite invitation. Wandering knights are obviously to be detained, if possible courteously. /Since Erec does not wish to stay, Gauvain has the king move camp to intercept him, and the king does so without hesitation. We learn later that only yesterday the queen expressed the desire to see Enide again (4146-48). Erec is obviously the object of the hunt.[64] It is interesting to note that Kay immediately refers to Enide as Erec's wife (3999), although she is veiled and not recognized. Gauvain, like Guivret, does not see her at all until Erec identifies himself. Then Gauvain runs ahead with the message:

> "Sire, fet il, or vos covient
> joie feire, vos et ma dame,
> que ci vient Erec et sa fame." (4172-74)

The king leaps to his feet with joy, saying that no other news could make him so happy. The mission has been accomplished, the hunt is over.

In the forest, Enide is welcomed as Erec's wife. As such she had left the court, but the marriage has almost been nullified by Erec's behaviour. The court thus recognizes a relationship which exists only in so far as appearances are concerned. The multiple deceptions and discrepancies of the forest home-coming leave no doubt that illusion and error are synonymous. The court as fountainhead of illusion is also that of silence, the silence of concealment and half-truths. Kay is supposed to have told the king everything about his meeting with Erec:

> au tref le roi vient, si li conte
> le voir, que rien ne l'an cela. (4052-3)

Yet he neglected to mention Erec's wounds, which came as a surprise to all, but of which Kay was very much aware when he attacked Erec (3972-75). There is no indication that Gauvain noticed Erec's condition. The physical facts of life and death do not pertain in this environment. In contrast to the almost scientific medical assistance later given to Erec outside the court, Arthur offers only a magic ointment which loses its power once

Erec returns to the outside world.[65] The tacit but omnipresent denial of the reality of physical death permeates the court. The silence of concealment stifles personal identity also, thus demonstrating the spiritual death of those who accept Arthurian immortality. Enide, hitherto most open and honest, resorts to deception to hide her identity:

> Et la dame par grant veidie,
> por ce qu'ele ne voloit mie
> qu'il la coneüst ne veïst,
> ausi con s'ele le feïst
> por le chaut ou por la poldriere,
> mist sa guinple devant sa chiere. (3957-62)

Erec's inner anonymity is symbolized by the state of his arms:

> tant cos d'espees et de lance
> aveit sor son escu eüz
> que toz li tainz an ert cheüz. (3954-56)

Therefore there was "nule veraie conuissance" (3953). Kay was instantly recognized because he wore no body armour. Erec also identified at a glance the shield, lance and horse as belonging to Gauvain (3949-50). The un-knightly figure is identifiable, for he is not concealed; the supposedly knightly but absent figure is identified by his arms. Taking Chrétien's irony to its conclusion, the knight proper is a hollow shell of arms identifiable by the paint on the outside and the horse beneath.

The fusion of Kay and Gauvain is another form of anonymity, a dispersion of identity. The narrator cannot accuse Kay of "felenie" directly, but says rather that he acts "com hom plains de grant felenie" (4020). Nothing is what it seems. Erec handily unhorses Kay with the butt end of his lance "por ce que il desarmez iere" (4023), thereby rewarding felony with generosity,[66] and feigns handing over Gauvain's horse to Enide. Erec thus vanquishes the counterfeit Gauvain with courtesy, just as he himself will be courteously tricked into revealing his own identity by Gauvain himself. This strange joust has symbolic meaning, since in the next adventure Erec displays ill-timed and vacuous courtesy, and in the following one his killing of an unarmed man without challenge appears rather Kay-like. Each step in Erec's quest takes him further away from rational conduct and personal identity. At the end of the next episode, he instructs Cadoc to go to Arthur's forest court, there to learn the name of his benefactor. He thus holds his identity by and through Arthur, just before lapsing into the almost permanent anonymity of near death.

Enide entered Arthur's forest court veiled, anonymous. She leaves it mute. Erec does not tell her to be quiet. They do not speak at all until Erec hears the cry of distress. Erec in turn tells Enide about the cry as if she were unable to hear for herself. He tells her to dismount and wait for him there. Erec finds the maiden lamenting that her ami has been taken off and is being maltreated by two giants. Erec in his turn has trouble hearing: he asks her why she is weeping. Everything must pass from the outer ear to the inner ear by ironic progression. The maiden's explanation sums up the fears Enide expressed in her monologues: life is meaningless to her without her love, the best knight who ever was and who is in immediate danger of death. Like Enide, she is incapable of envisaging life without the knight who has become her unique raison d'être. The damsel begs Erec for help. Erec's reassurances that he will do his best, that he will liberate her lover or remain prisoner with him, are just as conventional as her lament. No reference is made to Enide. However urgent the matter, the verbal conventions must be adhered to. The entire conversation occupies the reader for the space of roughly forty lines, of which perhaps ten contain relevant information (4308-45). The mockery of such conventions of speech is more direct when Erec comes upon the appalling scene of the knight tied naked and bleeding upon a nag. He has been beaten until raw flesh exposes the bone, and the nag is covered with flowing blood. The giants bear steel tipped maces and whips. They would seem at a glance to be beyond the reach of knightly conventions. Erec, however, reins in to a stop and begins a quasi-legal peroration:

> "Seignor, fet il, por quel forfet,
> feites a cest home tel let,
> qui come larron l'an menez?
> Trop laidemant le demenez:
> ausi le menez par sanblant
> con se il fust repris anblant.
> Grant viltance est de chevalier
> nu despoillier, et puis lier
> et batre si vilainemant;
> randez le moi, jel vos demant,
> par franchise et par corteisie;
> par force nel demant je mie. (4379-90)

Erec's pedantic progression of thought must be accepted as ludicrous under the circumstances. The idea that the giants understand franchise and corteisie and respect Erec's gentle preference to avoid the use of force is equally so. This is not at all the same Erec who smashed his way through the first series of adventures without a single knightly scruple. The new Erec is emulating Gauvain. Strangely enough, the giants seems quite prepared to talk. They address Erec respectfully as "vous" and point out that action, not words, is necessary, using a dicton: "S'il vos poise, si l'amandez" (4394). Erec delivers himself of a seven line challenge, which includes the expression of his displeasure (por voir, m'an poise, 4395) and a sportsman-like "May the best man win" (qui le porra avoir, si l'ait, 4398). Again he is warned that it is madness to oppose them. The giants seem more astonished than angry. Erec responds to their reference to him as a lamb among wolves by the following two proverbs:

> Se li ciax chiet et terre font,
> dons sera prise mainte aloe;
> tex vaut petit qui molt se loe. (4408-10)

If he is a lamb, the two giants have become larks. The second proverb would have something of the English expression, "The bigger they are, the harder they fall," in that it is completely incongruous juxtaposed with the lark proverb and, further, relative size is being played with on a physical and psychological level at the same time. This is rather sophisticated verbal jousting. Just before they clash, the narrator shows the giants strong and fierce, holding massive clubs in clenched fists. The power of the image is such that they seem to tower over Erec, who is obviously on horseback, his lance ready. One blow eliminates the first giant with a lance thrust through the eye:

> einz fiert le primerain an l'uel
> si par mi outre le cervel
> que d'autre part le haterel
> li sans et la cervele an saut; (4418-21)

Inasmuch as one can read haterel as neck or nape, the thrust was downward, which makes the giant smaller than was suspected. With his sword, Erec strikes the second giant on the head with sufficient force to split him in two right down to the saddle bow. He too, then, was not very large. Both, in fact, were small enough to ride horses. Lewis suggests that medieval authors showed little consistency in establishing the size of any given giant.[67] In my opinion such is not the case with Chrétien. The giant in Yvain (4188-4241) is consistently taller than Yvain, who strikes no blow higher than the cheek; the giant falls with the crash of a felled oak, a minor exaggeration perhaps, but it should be remembered that to Yvain the giant seems a tremendous obstacle, not only physically, but psychologically. Erec's adventure requires adversaries who are only apparently insuperable. No reference is made to extraordinary height or force except the use of the word "giant" and their own statement that even were there four Erecs, all four would be as a lamb beset by two wolves (4404-6). The combat is reduced to three blows, the two fatal ones struck by Erec and one which almost knocks Erec off his horse, although it is parried by his shield and he is himself untouched (4412-46). This battle is child's play compared with all the others. The difficulty was illusory and so, it would appear, was the danger, since the rescued knight proves to be in surprisingly good shape. He dresses, mounts one of the giants' horses, and leads the other an destre with no help from Erec. The two knights enjoy a long conversation on the way back with no reference to either being badly wounded. Erec counters Cadoc's offer to accompany him with the now customary insistence that he must go his way alone. Erec's negation of his wife's existence persists as long as the adventure lasts. He will give Cadoc as a present to the grieving lady and send both to Arthur's court in the woods, there to tell what great service he has performed for them. Both knights remain anonymous: Cadoc, asked for his name, says he will not conceal it, but never reveals it; Erec is to be identified by Arthur from the information that he is the same knight whom Arthur welcomed to his tent the night before.[68]

At this juncture in the story, it can be perceived that the stay at Arthur's court serves as a turning point in the narrative. Erec now holds his identity through Arthur, through renom, an illusion as opposed to nom, his own personal identity. His anonymity is complete. The court failed initially in its own quest for renown because Erec did not talk about his adventures. The giant episode provides this renown, for Erec has successfully completed an adventure outstanding in its generic conventionality. It has been created and conducted almost exclusively by words. Erec's heroism, recounted at court, will no doubt amount to a great deal more than the two blows actually struck and the one received. The account will presumably take the form in which it was presented to us by the narrator: Cadoc will be portrayed as a noble knight treated mercilessly by two felonious giants, and Erec will be portrayed as the liberator who restores the knight to his grieving lady. Yet at the time of the adventure, it is suggested that Cadoc is a robber-knight, since Erec himself remarked that Cadoc was being treated as though he were a thief caught in the act. Because Erec could not believe that Cadoc might be a robber-knight he answered his own questions, thereby acquitting Cadoc of the charge. The situation did not depict the giants as vicious, nor was Cadoc's condition as serious as the narrator suggested. The giants were not very big and they were certainly easy to defeat. Notwithstanding this, Erec feels his actions have brought him enor (4500-4507) and he wishes the court to know of them. Fictional or generic criteria, not reason, become the basis for judgement.

Initially, speech as used by Enide and Erec's father reflected the actual situation and suggested logically corresponding action. Enide and King Lac have been stilled. Erec and the count used words to deceive Enide or each other. After the turning point in the forest, deceit is no longer directed outward; it becomes self-deceit. Words create more than illusion; they now become capable of creating a false reality. There is an increasing dislocation between the actual situation and the conventional speech patterns. It is to the latter that action is now made to correspond. Fact is increasingly replaced by fiction. Erec's speeches addressed to the giants are loosely joined clichés and proverbs. Proverbs are plentiful in this romance. They are verbiage, like Arthur's speech on kingship, or Erec's explanations to his father, designed to reveal to the reader the absence of the rational processes which should relate word and action. The proverbs of the early part of the romance would pass unnoticed, were it not for the giant and the *Joie* episodes, in which they replace conversation. Communication reduced to illogical fragments is like the ritualistic or patterned behaviour of chivalry; lacking rational foundation, both tend to alienate people from each other, thereby producing conflict.

Arthur's society is based on conflict, supposedly upon physical combat. Erec's belief in what the court advocates, for example the defense of the oppressed, or the winning of a lady by force of arms, exists independently of what the court does. He does not perceive that the knights at court do not fight for their ladies, either to win them or to defend their claim to beauty. He is taken in by appearances.

His joust with Kay-Gauvain in the forest discloses the court to be nothing but appearances which he adopts so that he may complete an adventure qualifying him as a knight, although he still lacks the lady and the dwarf. Maintaining appearances is a matter of replacing deeds with words. The knights at court fight only in tournament or verbally, in argument. They do not seek adventure or rectify injustice. They hunt, seeking renom through the deeds of others. Kay alone fights. He is spontaneously aggressive and discourteous. He represents the "dwarf" of the court's image, the customary promptness to engage in combat. His defeat (for Kay never wins), reflects the defeat or recréantise of the knights who come to Arthur's court, the "losers", like Cadoc, Yder and, ultimately, like Erec himself. Kay represents the true state of the court, for which Gauvain provides the counterbalance. Gauvain (who never loses) is illustrious in tournament and therefore able to give the impression that where Kay fails he would succeed. His success in this romance is limited entirely to words. He succeeds in conveying an image of wisdom and dignity by trying to prevent the hunt for the white stag. He has nothing at stake, for he has no lady, and it is perhaps significant that he is not named as being present during the hunt. He goes to any lengths to avoid a fight, even on a verbal level, for he is courteous. In his case, the use of words has become a total replacement for action. Courtesy is also speech patterned to deceive, or, specifically, to endow the court with a reputation for knightly valour and courtly manners. Gauvain is to the court what the lady is to the knight: unsubstantiated renown. Upon him, as upon the lady, rests the illusion of knightly achievement. In becoming Kay-Gauvain for this episode, Erec has merged the limited prowess of Kay and the verbal dexterity of Gauvain, to emerge a hero. Kay and Gauvain have become temporary replacements for the dwarf and the lady. As Erec moves toward the stasis of perfection, knightly action diminishes and words become increasingly misleading. The limited action of the giant episode is exceeded in brevity only by Erec's dispatching the count de Limors with one blow.

The shift from action, which predominates in the first series of adventures, to words, which predominate in the second, makes of the adventures two triptychs of the knight, the lady and the dwarf, with the brief sojourn at Arthur's court as a transitional link. In the first series, Erec sheds all that binds him to the outside world. He abandons his father, negating his position as prince and son. In his defeat of the robber-knights, he becomes himself a robber-knight by taking their horses to pay his way. In the first count episode, he divests himself of his role as husband, while Enide protects him. In the first Guivret encounter, he replaces Enide's protection with that of Guivret, but fails to take the elementary precaution of keeping Guivret with him. Symbolic of his rejection of the ties which would make him an effective prince, husband and knight as would befit the heir to the throne, he is physically close to death as a result of the wounds inflicted by Guivret or by his own concept of honour. Still lacking the lady and the dwarf, but determined to continue his adventurous life as if oblivious of his own mortality, he is in a sort of limbo, belonging neither to the world he has left nor to the Arthurian court, which now opens to allow him to take on the appearance of knightly perfection.

The rescue of Cadoc gives Erec the renown which he recognizes as corresponding to an Arthurian ideal; for the first time since the sparrow-hawk adventure, he sends word of his achievement to the court. He has suppressed the image of the robber-knight in both himself and Cadoc, and replaced it with the illusion of the illustrious knight-errant. In Erec's mind, however, his quest is not complete until he wins his lady. Since Erec's lady does not incite him to fight except in self-defense, he must also win the dwarf. This second group of adventures provides Erec with illusory replacements for the roles which he rejected in the first series. There is, in the second series, a minimal relationship between the event and Erec's interpretation or reconstruction of the situation. The de Limors episode is an excellent example of this.

For Bezzola, the adventures following Erec's brief stay at Arthur's court demonstrate Erec's adherence to the ideal that the knight must protect the weak and the oppressed, especially women.[69] The essential flaw in this argument is that a distinction ought to be made between a knight's obligation to defend oppressed womanhood in general and his primary duty towards his own wife. The woman "oppressed" in this romance is Enide herself, and the oppressor is her own husband, whose neglect of her finally results in a forced marriage to another, followed by very real pain and suffering. There is a parallel between Yder's tacit acceptance of the lashing of the queen's maid and Erec's sleep while Enide is abused. Neither knight is conscious of personal responsibility. Both operate in the moral vacuum at once prescribed and permitted by anonymity.[70] The apparent selflessness of the perfect knight is not personal commitment to the good cause, but a selfish quest for renown.

Since this renown depends upon the acquisition of a beautiful lady, Erec abandons Enide for the Cadoc adventure with the result that she now becomes the "damsel in distress". The same basic situation is now viewed somewhat differently. Enide no longer doubts Erec's ability to fight. Her fear is that he has left her altogether (4545-47). This fear was already in her mind as she debated whether or not to warn Erec of Guivret's attack in the first series of adventures (3731-33). Erec has been abandoning Enide as wife in one way or another all along. It is highly suspect, therefore, that Erec should suddenly express concern for his wife at this stage:

> Et il restoit an grant redot
> qu'aucuns ne l'an eüst menee,
> qui l'eüst a sa loi tornee;
> si se hastoit molt del retor. (4548-51)

It is not necessary to interpret this passage as an abrupt twinge of conscience, nor, indeed, would such an interpretation be consistent with Erec's rejection of external reality. It is more plausible to assume that since Erec's own concept of his Arthurian career requires him to win his lady in combat, he has been deliberately placing her in ever greater jeopardy so that she will be reliant solely on his prowess. His fear, then, is that he has waited just a little too long. Ironically, he arrives too soon because no adversary is there. Overcome by loss of blood from his re-opened wounds, he falls as if dead. Enide is now the maiden lamenting in the wilderness. Her knight, like Cadoc, is bathed in blood, his prowess immobilized. Her laments are heard "de loing" (4640), as were those of Cadoc's lady, by another knight. He is to be Erec's replacement for this adventure as the rescuing knight. As the suitor offering wealth, honour and rank, and the husband who mistreats his wife for disobedience, he is again a replacement for Erec. This count is a caricature of the first count, who was also an Erec-figure, as has already been discussed. Erec, in abandoning his wife to help the ideal damsel in distress (whom he addresses as "ma douce amie", 4532), has exposed Enide to a danger of which he was fully cognizant.

In keeping with the structural division of adventures into two series, Enide's first lament was that of a wife who saw herself an obstacle to her husband's success, who had doubts about her husband, and who spoke out vigorously urging him to attend to his knighthood. Her subsequent bewilderment made it clear that she was not advocating adventure but attention to duty within the kingdom. Since that moment she has bitterly regretted her "con mar fus", and now considers that by these words she has become her husband's murderer (4585-91). Her character is subsequently fragmented into the two roles of amie and femme, but the second lament indicates that the role of amie predominates as she lapses into the verbal conventions of the illusion, accepting empty words as a replacement for truth. She turns to proverb to express the idea that silence will never cause harm but that speech often injures (4592-93). Unwittingly and ironically she reiterates the phrase which this time does not awaken her sleeping lord: "Haï! sire, con mar i fus!" (4599). In direct contrast to the previous utterance of the line, there is now no vestige of a doubt in Enide's mind:

> A toi ne s'apareilloit nus,
> qu'an toi s'estoit biautez miree,
> proesce s'i ert esprovee,
> savoirs t'avoit son cuer doné,
> largesce t'avoit coroné,
> cele sanz cui nus n'a grant pris. (4600-5)

Ironically, these are Enide's qualities, not Erec's. Ironically, also, these are the same virtues attributed to Erec with the qualifying verb sanbler after the two day tournament (2209-14, cited p. 68). Enide then returns to the idea of her own guilt and prepares to kill herself, to avenge Erec's death with his own sword. Enide's tendency to assume blame is as remarkable as Erec's need to feel none.

Cadoc's lady was rescued by a "knightly" knight. Enide's "rescuing" knight is a despicable character associated in the narrator's mind with God's own mercy (4634-46). He stays her hand asking, "s'ele estoit sa fame ou s'amie" (4650).

> "L'un et l'autre, fet ele, sire;
> tel duel ai ne vos sai que dire,
> mes moi poise quant ne sui morte." (4651-3)

She grieves for Erec, wishing for death. Like Cadoc's lady, she sees the death of her knight as the end of her own life, such is the fusion of identity between the two. She also grieves because being "l'un et l'autre" has been the cause of her husband's death. She believes that had she remained silent, his death would have been avoided. Like Enide's father and the first count, de Limors perceives that she would be an enhancement to even the loftiest social position, and prepares to marry her immediately (4677-90, 4714-28). Against her will Enide becomes his wife (4729-35).

> Aprés vespres, un jor de mai,
> estoit Enyde an grant esmai. (4741-42)

The first line evokes the premiers vers, the idyll, the promise of love and joy; the second, the misery that followed such promise. Now married for the second time, the promise of honour is once more followed by abuse as the count tries to force her to eat by threats, then blows.

Antre ces diz et ces tançons,
revint Erec de pasmeisons,
ausi come hom qui s'esvoille,
S'il s'esbahi, ne fu mervoille,
des genz qu'il vit an viron lui;
mes grant duel a et grant enui,
quant la voiz sa fame entandi. (4815-21)

His wife has wakened him again, this time with the most vigorous words of defiance addressed to her "husband", the count. This awakening is the most dramatic of all and striking in its contrast to the preceding giant episode. Erec runs to Enide and strikes the count dead "sanz desfiance et sanz parole" (4829). There is no challenge, no formal attempt to discuss the merits of the situation, not even a moment's hesitation to assess the predicament in which Enide finds herself. He strikes an unarmed man seated at dinner (4878). The narrator claims that Erec is moved by his love for his wife and by anger (4824-5). The gesture seems spontaneous, if most unknightly. Because of the emphasis on the word fame (4821, 4825 and 4879), the reader cannot help but feel that Erec has finally come to his senses, and therefore expects from Erec some expression of admiration regarding Enide's outstanding display of courage and determination, or some expression of regret for having needlessly exposed her to continuous danger. Instead, Erec explains that he has put her through a testing period, that he loves her more than ever, that he knows she loves him. He terminates the speech by pardoning her for whatever she may have said and done.

To understand the reconciliation speech one must see Erec's view of the episode, given on two separate occasions. The first is his account to Guivret:

> . . . et il li conte
> comant il a ocis le conte
> la ou il seoit a la table,
> et comant devant une estable
> avoit recovré son destrier
> comant sergent et chevalier
> fuiant crioient an la place:
> "Fuiez! Fuiez! Li morz nos chace!"[71]
> comant i dut estre antrapez
> et comant il est eschapez. (5055-64)

There is no mention of Enide. His story centers around his own entrapment and his own liberation. The prime achievement seems to have been getting his horse back. The second telling is much abbreviated. It takes place after the second Guivret encounter, and after the Joie episode, as he tells Arthur all he has done:

> trestot en ordre pres a pres
> ses avantures lor conta
> jusque la ou il esfronta
> le conte qui sist au mangier,
> et con recovra son destrier. (6434-38)

Not only is there no mention of Enide, but Erec stops here as if at the apex of his achievement. The adventure is distilled into the killing of an unarmed man and the recovery of the essence of his knighthood. When he and Enide rushed out of the count's palace, they found the horse being taken to water. "Cest aventure li fu bele" (4862), says the narrator, an echo of Erec's attitude toward the sparrow-hawk adventure:

> De s'avanture s'esjoïst;
> molt estoit liez de s'avanture,
> qu'amie a bele a desmesure,
> saige et cortoise et de bon aire. (1462-65)

Another slender connection between the two adventures may be found in Guinevere's summary of the first:

> bien doit venir a cort de roi
> qui par ses armes puet conquerre
> si bele dame en autre terre. (1722-24)

The first time the winning of Enide was secondary, personal vengeance being the primary object of the fight (supra p. 54). There is no dichotomy in the count adventure; according to the narrator, love of Enide and anger against the count allow Erec to fulfill the destiny which Guinevere took as a *fait accompli*. When Erec reduces the adventure into the recovery of the horse, the reader is obliged to recognize that Erec is unchanged. Enide has become an interiorized sine qua non of Erec's knighthood, just as she was after the Yder combat.[72] The day after the escape, the horse is still Erec's primary thought:

> Erec ot molt son cheval chier,
> que d'autre chevalchier n'ot cure.
> Enide ont bailliee une mure,
> qui perdu ot son palefroi; (5134-37)

Enide has lost the one remaining link with her previous life. Moreover, with Guivret now in charge of Erec's chivalry, she has been demoted to riding a mule, and accepts the demotion (5138-44), just as she accepts Guivret as a new partner in Erec's life (5121-2).

The reconciliation speech is now easier to understand:

> . . . "Ma dolce suer,
> bien vos ai de tot essaiee.
> Or ne soiez plus esmaiee,
> c'or vos aim plus qu'ainz mes ne fis,
> et je resui certains et fis
> que vos m'amez parfitemant.
> Or voel estre d'or en avant,
> ausi con j'estoie devant,
> tot a vostre comandemant;
> et se vos rien m'avez mesdit,
> je le vos pardoing tot et quit
> del forfet et de la parole." (4882-93)

Enide has passed the tests: she has learned the lesson of silence and now Erec can love her more than he ever did; now he knows that she loves him perfectly, because her silence proves her confidence in him. There is searing irony in his comment that he will be at her command just as before. He has never been at her command except when she is mute, and when he can safely assume their wills to be one. He is suggesting that they resume the honeymoon together and put an end to their adventures. He correctly surmises that Enide will never again accuse him of *recréantise*. He is now prepared to assume that Enide as *amie* had some right to suggest that he was *recréant* ("*if* you said anything wrong . . ."). It is possible that the "forfet" was the fault for which Enide originally blamed herself, that of causing Erec's *recréantise*, although it is more likely to be the act of speaking out.[73]

As communication, the speech fails:

> Or n'est pas Enyde a maleise,
> quant ses sires l'acole et beise,
> et de s'amor la raseüre. (4895-7)

She is assured of his love by his actions and by his speech. What he said might just as well have been a monologue or a conversation with his soul,[74] something like a confession from which one emerges cleansed of all imperfections. "Ma douce soeur" implies a new relationship, completely interiorized, with a mirror image. Enide remains silent, basking in the love of her perfect knight.

We would seem to have here a resurrection scene, except that there is some doubt as to whether Erec is alive or dead. Chrétien plays with the ambiguity. The crowd fled before "le mort" (4840, 5062). Guivret hears the news that a knight has been found dead by the Count of Limors, who has gone off with le cors and intends to marry la dame against her will (4904-14). Guivret remembers Erec and decides to fetch "the lady" and bury "the body", if indeed it is Erec (4915-21). He assembles a thousand knights to raze the castle in the event that the count will not give up "le cors et la dame" (4925). It is superbly ironic that Guivret should gather an army to acquit himself of his pledge to save Erec, who is now just "a body and a lady", and all because of Guivret himself, since Erec's weakness derives from the wounds originally inflicted by the man who is now determined to save him. The host advances toward Limors under the same bright moonlight that is casting its spell on the fleeing lovers (4898-4900, 4927-28). At the very moment when Erec is turning away from a life of chivalry, the symbol of his militancy seeks him out. Guivret's friendship and pledge of assistance, should Erec need help, prove meaningless on the level of interpretation which proposes that he is rescuing Erec from the Count of Limors. Essentially a fighter, self-centered in his quest for renown, Guivret cannot function as a public benefactor unless renown and service in some way coincide. Personal ties of love and loyalty are lost in the anonymity which chivalry imposes. However, on the second level of interpretation, which views Guivret as Erec's dwarf or fighter instinct which must counterbalance his desire for otium, Guivret does arrive in time to prevent Erec's relapse. The moonlight embraces Erec the lover (Enide) and Erec the warrior (Guivret), melding the two into one.

Erec is enclosed in hedgerows, unable to avoid conflict (4946-48) just as he was unable to avoid crossing Guivret's drawbridge earlier. He hides Enide beside the hedge and rides forward hoping the force will pass by. He cannot avoid a fight, however, for the little knight Guivret is spurring down on him, lance lowered, exactly as in their first encounter. The two men do not recognize each other, the narrator explains, because the moon is suddenly hidden under a cloud, and it will be madness if Erec does not identify himself (4962-69), for he is in no condition to fight. The narrator is clutching at straws in his attempt to justify totally irrational behaviour. The state of the moon is irrelevant, for it is inner anonymity which is complete. Silence and the narrator's purely rhetorical moon conspire to conceal identity as neither one speaks (4972-3). The fight is unequal. The narrator for a second time stresses Erec's weakened condition, as if to exonerate him from a charge of recréantise. With one blow, Guivret knocks Erec from his horse. Enide, the silent partner as long as Erec is on his horse, now chastizes Guivret roundly. Guivret does not recognize her any more than he does Erec, stretched out at his feet in the same armour he wore the day before. He does recognize Enide's love and loyalty, for which he praises her. With two assurances that they can pass on in safety, he asks Erec's name. The irony of his assurances cannot be overlooked, since it may well be too late: the reader is very aware that

Guivret's courteous response takes place over a prostrate body, the body he is in fact looking for. This exchange is another example of conventional verbal exchange which bears no rapport with reality, the words belying the actions in Guivret's case. Indeed, when he then discovers that the body is Erec, he is overjoyed:

> Guivrez descent, qui molt fu liez,
> et vet Erec cheoir as piez
> la ou il gisoit a la terre:
> "Sire, je vos aloie querre,
> fet il, a Lymors droite voie,
> car mort trover vos i cuidoie. (5025-30)

Guivret's mission is accomplished. Guivret kneels at the feet of his friend and lord. He thought to find him dead. He is dead. He has lost his identity. The total anonymity shrouding this encounter indicates the passage into stasis or death of all three who rise again as one. Guivret's sisters[75] will resurrect Erec, at which point both Guivret and Enide will have lost those characteristics which Chrétien gave them to indicate their independent personalities. Guivret will lose his combativeness. Enide will lose her outspokenness. Both will be interiorized adjuncts to Erec's knighthood.[76]

Those critics who find this episode an

inexplicable intrusion into the narrative[77] are bewildered because it has no function on the surface narrative level. It is uniquely concerned with Erec's death as an individual and his resurrection into, and not out of, the world of illusion.[78]

Guivret insists that he must be pardoned because he did not recognize Erec. Erec grants a gracious pardon accepting Guivret's excuse as reasonable (5044-54). The scene in Guivret's tent has a religious aura. Candles are lit. Erec's wounds are washed and bound by Enide. He is placed on a bed of grass and rushes and is covered. The meal is almost a parody of the Last Supper with three pastez, one each, and watered wine. The next day, at Guivret's castle, his sisters begin medical attention by cutting away the dead flesh (5158). In the days that follow, Enide is always present:

> Mes, qui qu'alast ne anz ne hors,
> toz jorz estoit devant son cors
> Enyde, cui plus an tenoit. (5167-9)

Enide keeps watch over the body. After two weeks the pain is gone, Erec's colour returns and he is bathed. The resurrection is complete. Guivret gives to each an elegant robe, accompanied by an equally elegant anaphora:

Or fu Erec toz forz et sains,
or fu gariz et respassez,
or fu Enyde liee assez,
or ot sa joie et son delit.
Ansanble jurent an un lit,
et li uns l'autre acole et beise: (5196-5201)

With this transitional passage, we are taken back in time to Enide's ceremonial robing and the marriage night. Erec is ready to start all over again. It is time to leave:

"Sire, je ne puis plus atandre
que je ne m'an aille an ma terre;" (5218-9)

The reader may be temporarily gulled into thinking that Erec is returning to Carnant, but at the end of the speech Erec reveals that he will not stop until he reaches Arthur, "a Quarrois ou a Quaraduel" (5234)[79]. Once more we see Arthur continuously on the move. He is portrayed as ubiquitous, to convey the notion that he is to be found wherever one seeks him, since his court has only that reality which is vested in it by those who believe in it.

Erec leaves, complete with his lady and his dwarf. Enide is given a new mount: this palfrey's head is black on one side, white on the other, the two colours separated by a green line. The horse is a fiction, an invention.[80] Enide, too, has become a fiction, a victim of the illusion. The carvings on the saddle-bow explain the narrator's view of Enide's role and Erec's destiny:

> li arçon estoient d'ivoire,
> s'i fu antailliee l'estoire
> comant Eneas vint de Troye,
> comant a Cartaige a grant joie
> Dido an son leu le reçut,
> comant Eneas la deçut,
> comant ele por lui s'ocist,
> comant Eneas puis conquist
> Laurente et tote Lonbardie,
> dom il fu rois tote sa vie. (5289-98)

The narrator still accepts the greatness of Erec's destiny as king. All the doubts he has entertained all along concerning Enide are suggestively summed up in the Dido comparison. It was Enide who led Erec into uxoriousness, but Erec overcame temptations of the flesh to continue his mission. The narrator is preparing us for the final coronation scene. For the narrator, who is still attempting to make the romance generically sound, Dido is dead. The supposition is that Lavinia has taken her place.

The Joy and the Coronation

At Pointurie, Erec's return to health permits him to enjoy once more the joys of the marriage bed (5200-11), the "joy" which Erec sought in returning home to Carnant and which he envisaged after the reconciliation.[81] He leaves Guivret's castle, however, not only with Enide but also with Guivret:

> "Sire, seus n'an iroiz vos pas,
> car je m'an irai avoec vos,
> et s'an manrons ansanble o nos
> conpaignons, s'a pleisir vos vient." (5236-39)

Erec is no longer to be alone. The group is accompanied by companions and also by symbols of the hunt, birds of prey and dogs "por aus deduire et deporter" (5318), seeking Arthur just as Arthur had previously "hunted" for Erec. Erec the hunter is now complete with both attributes of knighthood, in contrast to his benighted status at the beginning of the romance, when without lady or dwarf he did not participate in the hunt. The fusion of identity is indicated by Enide's silence, which is not broken until after the Joie episode. Although all three are supposedly together for most of the action which ensues, their presence alternates. They have become masks, each reflecting an aspect of Erec's ambition: Enide represents the promise of Joy which lures Erec onward; Guivret is the promise of renown in combat. Maboagrain represents the Erec-figure, the perfect knight; his lady is a composite of Enide and Guivret since, unlike Enide, she is the one who goads Maboagrain into combat.

In killing the count de Limors, Erec dispatched forever the husband in himself. To kill the warrior-lover, Maboagrain, would mean imprisonment in the garden. In defeat, death would be without remedy. The adventure is presented as a form of suicide.

Brandigan, surrounded by rushing water, is the Celtic otherworld of death, as is Gorre in Lancelot. Both are lands from which none supposedly returns. Before its beauty, Erec stops and asks for information. In Yvain, Arthur's court is outstanding for its insatiable curiosity, which leads knights into error. The theme of curiosity is relatively undeveloped in Erec, limited up to this point to attempts to break down the barriers of knightly anonymity, on the general assumption that any anonymous knight's business is likely to be the business of the court. Here, as in Yvain, curiosity leads to the undertaking of an adventure, but stops short of allowing information to be revealed concerning the merits of the situation. Erec's curiosity is initially quite natural. However, when he asks if the castle belongs to a king or a count, Chrétien is signalling that Erec's mental state is one of illusion or error.[82] Guivret answers fully, piquing Erec's curiosity again with details which reveal the castle as extraordinary: the walls have no defensive purpose, since this most rich and self-sustaining fortress is protected by rushing water. Drawn toward the illusory, Erec states his determination to visit the castle. Guivret further arouses his curiosity by suggesting that this would be dangerous. To Erec's further questions, Guivret answers using the word adventure three times and specifies that the danger is certain death (5386-98). Were Erec to know more, he says, Erec would want to undertake the adventure (5380-85). Therefore he will explain nothing more unless Erec promises that he will not seek the adventure from which no man returns alive (5392-98). "Or ot Erec ce qui li siet" (5399), indicates that Erec is now satisfied that the adventure is for him. There is no need to inquire further, since adventure is its own reward. Erec continues:

> et por ce voel qu'il ne vos poist,
> que, se il nule enors m'i croist,
> ce vos devroit estre molt bel.
> De l'avanture vos apel
> que seulemant le non me dites,
> et del sorplus soiez toz quites. (5405-10)

In asking only for the name and nothing more, Erec places limits on the amount of information he desires. More important, it is now obvious that Guivret's former sense of honour is now transferred to Erec. Guivret himself no longer seeks combat. He will bask in Erec's glory. Guivret and Erec have not been conversing as two separate people. Guivret has not been trying to dissuade Erec from the adventure, but to incite him toward it. They speak and act as one. Guivret tells Erec the name, Joie de la Cort. Nothing can dissuade Erec now. He is certain that the joy of the adventure is identical to the joy he has always sought:

> -Dex! an joie n'a se bien non,
> fet Erec; ce vois je querant.
> Ne m'alez ci desesperant,
> biax amis, ne de ce ne d'el,
> mes feisons prandre nostre ostel,
> que granz biens an puet avenir.
> Rien ne me porroit retenir
> que je n'aille querre la Joie." (5418-25)

When he hopes that good may come of the adventure, he is referring to his own good, his own joy, for Erec is indifferent to all else. Guivret capitulates (5426-44) and disappears from the narrative until the adventure is terminated. His role is finished.

Erec rides into Brandigan, drawing all eyes to himself alone. Guivret and Enide are as if invisible as Erec's beauty, or sensuality, blazes forth:

> et les genz, qui sont amassées
> par la rue a granz tropeiax,
> voient Erec, qui tant est biax
> que par sanblant cuident et croient[83]
> que trestuit li autre a lui soient.
> A mervoilles l'esgardent tuit; (5448-53)

His beauty is a sign to the people that he is destined for this adventure (5458-63). They cross themselves (5459).[84] Erec is "biax a desmesure" (5472) as was Enide in the premiers vers (1464). Enide's beauty has shone like a beacon throughout the romance, but her sensuality has always had with it a counter-balance of common sense and an awareness of the dangers. Her father praised her wisdom (savoirs) as worth more than her beauty (537-38), a wisdom which made her aware of the external contingencies of life. Erec's love of indolence and ease and of sexual gratification has no counter-balance except for the influence of Guivret, which makes him pursue the mirage of honour. The two sides of his character come together in this adventure:

> . . . "Dex te desfande,
> chevaliers, de mesavanture;
> car tu ies biax a desmesure,
> et molt fet ta biautez a plaindre,
> car demain la verrons estaindre:
> a demain est ta morz venue;
> demain morras sanz retenue,
> se Dex ne te garde et desfant." (5470-77)

Beauty and death are inextricably linked.[85] Welcomed by Evrain, Erec is seduced by appeals to his senses, almost forgetting why he came. Enide now plays her role in the adventure. Hand in hand, the couple enter a beautiful room perfumed with incense:

> Mes por coi vos deviseroie
> la pointure des dras de soie,
> don la chanbre estoit anbelie?
> Le tans gasteroie an folie,
> et ge nel vuel mie haster;
> einçois me voel un po haster,
> que qui tost va par droite voie
> celui passe qui se desvoie:
> por ce ne m'i voel arester.
> Li rois comanda aprester
> le souper, quant tans fu et ore.
> Ici ne vuel feire demore,
> se trover puis voie plus droite:
> quanque cuers et boche covoite
> orent plenieremant la nuit,
> oisiax et venison et fruit
> et vin de diverse meniere;
> mes tot passa la bele chiere,
> que de toz mes est li plus dolz
> la bele chiere et li biax volz. (5523-42)

The narrator injects the notion of fleeing time, associating it with folie, the wasting or losing of time. He must press on, because, he says in a proverb, the one who goes straight ahead leaves behind the one who wanders from the path. Erec is definitely wandering from the path of his intentions, side-tracked by the temptations of the room. The only indication of time lost is in the abrupt transition: the king had supper prepared when it was time. The narrator repeats that now he will delay no more, but get to the point (voie plus droite, 5535). The following lines, however, are more devious than direct, mingling images of satisfaction of hunger and gratification of desire. The first image of Brandigan as an isolated self-sustaining fortress is replaced by the image of two lovers becoming one, feeding on each other, bound together in an almost tangible illusion so strong that it can only be broken from within, by Erec's sudden recall of that which had an even stronger hold on his heart, the call to adventure, to a still greater joy:

> Molt furent servi lieemant,
> tant qu'Erec estrosseemant
> leissa le mangier et le boivre,
> et comança a ramantoivre
> ce que au cuer plus li tenoit:
> de la Joie li sovenoit,
> s'an a la parole esmeüe;
> li rois Evrains l'a maintenue.
> "Sire, fet il, or est bien tans
> que je die ce que ge pans
> et por coi je sui ce venuz.
> Trop me sui del dire tenuz,
> or nel puis celer an avant:
> la Joie de la Cort demant,
> car nule rien tant ne covoit. (5543-57)

Eating and drinking are left abruptly. Evrain is pulled into focus as an actual presence at the table. Erec says, "It is time." Time resumes and with it appears the motif of speaking out, as opposed to being silent or making speech ambiguous. The king tells him to keep silent (5571). Hitherto, keeping silence has been the equivalent of maintaining or creating illusion. Now deep in the world of illusion, Erec is warned that he may break it, but he does not listen. The more the king speaks, the more Erec is enchanted by the difficulty of the task (5594-98). The spectre of recréantise still grips him (5604-8). The king is speaking the truth, while Erec's answers are simply conventional responses to a challenge. The king grants his request, promising that if he succeeds he will have greater honour than ever accrued to any man.

The next morning, Erec is already awake when dawn breaks. He is armed anew. Before the sparrow-hawk adventure, Erec was armed by Enide in her father's armour, an act symbolizing his role as husband and protector. He abandoned this role when he put on arms for the adventures which obtained for him his lady and his dwarf. Those arms may be called his Arthurian arms, for they were supposedly indestructible, but are now worn out and useless. He must now be provided with new arms to defeat the Arthurian dream.

Erec is mocked by the crowd on the way to the orchard. They tell him, using the "tu" form, that he had been betrayed by Joy, that he cannot conquer it, but will find death, as have so many other knights. The words "mar i fus" are again uttered, again an expression of pity in recognition of Erec's sensuality: "car tuit disoient: Mar y fus, biax chevalier, genz et adroiz" (5666-67). One may infer that Erec's beauty is a sign that this adventure is his, while at the same time it indicates to the crowd his inability to vanquish the illusion of joy.

The castle itself represents Erec's natural state, or his desire for otium, which Erec hopes to find again in Arthur's court. Beyond the castle walls, in even greater isolation, stands the orchard with its walls of air as strong as steel. For the first time, Chrétien is explicit about the apparent timelessness of the illusion: fruit and flower mingle in the garden in summer and in winter (5696-7), while at the same time the grisly row of impaled heads indicates the reality of death. The garden represents the Arthurian dream at once masked and unmasked. The narrator tells us that the fruits of the garden must be consumed within the walls. The knight and his lady are thus condemned to perpetual isolation, broken only by other contenders for this same joy. This hermetic relationship is identical to the one prefigured at Arthur's court, where each knight was prepared, theoretically, to defend his lady's claim to beauty, where chivalry is the affirmation of beauty and beauty the affirmation of chivalry. The combats of Yder, Erec and Maboagrain to defend their right to this sterile relationship all take place outside the court. Yder and Maboagrain are Arthurian knights only by virtue of their belief in the Arthurian code. This phenomenon, when considered in conjunction with the image of a constantly moving court, suggests that the court is not so much a place as a belief which may be found anywhere. The enchanted garden, viewed in this light, is a reality which Maboagrain created by the power of his belief in the illusion of the relationship between love and chivalry. More simply, it is an attempt to put into practice a theory that was never intended to be tested.

Erec is putting theory to the test as he rides into the garden anticipating, in the song of the birds, the joy which is to be his reward:

Erec aloit, lance sor fautre,
par mi le vergier chevauchant,
qui molt se delitoit el chant
des oisiax qui leanz chantoient,
qui la Joie li presantoient,
la chose a coi il plus baoit; (5718-23)

He sees the heads but is not afraid: for Erec, physical death is a mirage. He asks only about the horn hung on the last stake. The king explains the impaled heads, saying that Erec ought to be afraid. It is Evrain's last attempt to recall Erec to reality. His former concern for Erec is replaced by detachment. It is as if Erec has become one of a series of mindless knights who have come and will continue to come (5755-64). Concerning the horn hung on the last stake, the king offers no explanation, except to say that the one who sounds the horn will receive honour and renown in his country (de ma contree, 5769). The effect of the Joy is then limited to his country, to those who believe that liberation from the code is desirable.

The final lines of the king's speech inform Erec that he must now go on alone. Enide grieves silently while Erec expresses her fears, addressing her as "soeur", as in the reconciliation speech:

> Et cil, qui bien conuist son cuer,
> li a dit: "Bele douce suer,
> gentix dame leax et sage,
> bien conuis tot vostre corage:
> peor avez grant, bien le voi,
> si ne savez ancor por coi. (5783-88)

Erec assumes that he knows what Enide is thinking, although she has not uttered a word since the departure from Pointurie. Since the fusion of identities, Erec speaks for her, attributing to her the thoughts and fears which an amie may legitimately have, and reassuring her that only in defeat is there anything to fear. Again one finds the motif that Erec is without rational fear.

All through the romance, various onlookers have been concerned about Erec. King Lac and King Arthur's people both see Erec as already dead (2747-8, 4262-64). Enide's wifely warnings expressed a lack of confidence. Guivret went looking for the body of his friend. Erec's behaviour was suicidal. It still is. He is heading towards what promises to be a more permanent death, comforting himself with the idea that with Enide's love he need fear no living man (nul home vivant, 5809). The only doubt is expressed by Erec himself, and he does not believe in it.

Erec finds the lady on a silver bed under a sycamore. She is more beautiful than Lavinia. This second reference to the Aeneas legend is perplexing. She must be Dido, just as Enide is now Dido. The narrator, with the coronation in mind, assumed that Enide-Dido was dead. On the contrary, one might propose that Enide-Lavinia "died" when she turned her thoughts to suicide in recognition of her guilt, her wifely outspokenness. The Lavinia or the wife in Enide was silenced. The sounding of the horn breaks the silence, allowing Enide to make contact with the outside world and speak once more, however briefly, before the return to Arthur's court. The function of the horn is precisely that, to break the silence of the illusion and the associated timelessness, for only in silence can the illusion of immortality be maintained. The narrator's role is unenviable. From the marriage on, he has been unable to comprehend that Erec's concept of chivalry and Lac's concept of kingship are like parallel lines which must never meet, except as an optical illusion. From his point of view, the defeat of Maboagrain is desirable. He must therefore assume that Erec's motive in undertaking the adventure is altruistic, that Erec deliberately seeks to liberate another man from the error of uxoriousness which he himself has overcome. He believes that Arthurian doctrine has a rational foundation, and that Erec is wise.

Erec, on penetrating the garden alone, seems for a minute to think the lady the object of his quest. He not only approaches this silent image to see her more closely, he also sits down beside her. A knight appears instantly. He is huge, a foot taller than any other knight, and also more beautiful than any other knight "soz ciel" (5852), here below. Since Erec is "biax a desmesure", beautiful out of all proportion, they would appear to be fairly evenly matched for what is essentially a contest in sensuality, to determine which one's desire to remain in the garden is the greatest.

The verbal jousting which precedes the combat recalls the giant episode. To the knight's first words of threat, Erec answers with a volley of five proverbs:[86]

> "Amis, fet il, dire puet l'an
> folie ausi tost come san.
> Menaciez tant con vos pleira,
> et je sui cil qui se teira,
> qu'an menacier n'a nul savoir.

> Savez por coi? Tex cuide avoir
> le geu joé, qui puis le pert;
> et por c'est fos tot en apert
> qui trop cuide et qui trop menace.
> S'est qui fuie, asez est qui chace; (5869-78)

Maboagrain has accused Erec of trying to take his lady. She is a lure, an excuse for combat, as was Enide during the adventures. He accuses Erec of overconfidence (folie). Erec's answer, that one can talk nonsense (folie) as easily as sense, is an ironic reflection on the inability of either knight to distinguish the two. Erec is using the word folie in a different sense in his answer. Words are being used as in the giant episode, to conceal truth or reality in a vain attempt to make the illusion credible. There is no sense in what Erec says, only non-sense. The two knights are going through the ritual of exchange of words without communicating anything other than the fact that they are there to fight each other for no viable reason whatsoever. Erec claims that he will remain silent, since there is no wisdom in threats. Silence is wisdom and wisdom is his, by inference. Chrétien is playing with his theme of silence. "Do you know why?" Erec asks, and then, since his speech is essentially a monologue, he promptly answers his own question: he who thinks the game already won is the loser. He is now dealing with the question of over-confidence in vacuo, without relevance to Maboagrain's accusation. The next statement reinforces the idea that folly lies in over-confidence and threats. He has dealt with the charge but he has not answered it. The last line states the obvious: for every winner there is a loser. One of the many ironies in this passage is that the loser will be liberated and restored to sanity, whereas the victor will blow the horn signalling his own defeat, the destruction of the garden he wished to conquer. Irony is to be found also in the fact that Erec, who "will be silent", does not stop uttering meaningless formulae. Lastly, Erec is inferring that he is not threatening Maboagrain, which is the equivalent of denying his presence in the garden as an aggressor. The conclusion to his speech annuls all he has said, for it consists of nothing but threats (5879-84). Erec's speech, like his behaviour, is totally irrational.

Like Yder and Guivret, the knight is apparently Erec's equal. The fighters move in perfect unison, each inflicting the same damage upon the other until, blinded by sweat and blood, they strike empty blows. They then wrestle, first on foot and then "longuemant" (5948) on their knees. Shortly after three in the afternoon the combat ends. Erec breaks the knight's helmet laces, pulling him forward so that he falls, face down, too exhausted to move. As in the Yder and Guivret combats, the ultimate victory lacks éclat.

The exchange of names is revealing. Erec asks the knight if he has heard of King Lac and of his son, Erec. The knight knows the king:

> -Oïl, sire, bien le conui,
> car a la cort le roi Lac fui
> mainz jorz, ainz que chevaliers fusse,
> ne ja, son vuel, ne m'an meüsse
> d'ansanble lui por nule rien. (5989-93)

This answer could very well have been given by Erec himself, who insists that the knight must have known him well if they were together at his father's court. But in fact there is no recognition on either side. Both have isolated themselves from their attachments with the past. If Erec's identification is oblique, Maboagrain's is more so:

> Maboagrins sui apelez
> mes ne sui mes point coneüz,
> an leu ou j'aie esté veüz,
> par remanbrance de cest non,
> s'an cest païs solemant non;
> car onques tant con vaslez fui,
> mon non ne dis ne ne conui. (6082-88)

Maboagrain is featureless and nameless except in Evrain's country. His identity is linked with the garden in which he was dubbed by his uncle, Evrain, and in which he simultaneously became prisoner of his lady. He had previously pledged a "rash boon", which he could not refuse: "Qui veheroit neant s'amie?" (6008) When he was dubbed, she informed him that he had pledged never to leave the garden until a knight might come who could defeat him. His sense of honour demanded that he fulfil the pledge, even if it meant killing his best friend. His fear of losing her love has condemned him for life to this "prison" (6047). He disclaims any responsibility for his murders:

> mes miens n'an est mie li torz,
> qui reison voldroit esgarder:
> de ce ne me poi ge garder,
> se ge ne volsisse estre fax
> et foi mantie et deslëax, . . . (6060-4)

These passages explain fully why each of Arthur's five hundred knights was prepared to fight for his lady, rightly or wrongly. They sum up what is irrational and amoral at Arthur's court and disclose the emptiness of Arthurian concepts of honour and love. They explain why Erec set out to create an adventure in which he might fight to win Enide, wholly by his own efforts. Maboagrain goes on to disillusion Erec completely: joy consists of breaking out of the prison (6092-97). Erec has defeated the Arthurian concept of joy, he has not "won" joy for himself. Erec must sound the horn to liberate the knight:

> Erec le prant et si le sone;
> tote sa force i abandone
> si que molt loing an va l'oïe. (6109-11)

Joy comes to Enide, to the king and to all the people throughout the land. A song is sung for the occasion:

> et les dames un lai troverent
> que le Lai de Joie apelerent;
> mes n'est gueres li lais saüz. (6135-7)

Chrétien is again commenting on the fact that this concept of joy is not very widespread.

The lady of the garden has remained silent and motionless throughout the combat. After it is over, she remains, grieving the loss of her lover. Enide moves to her, showing the first spontaneous compassion of the romance. In their conversation it is revealed that they are cousins. For them, as opposed to Maboagrain and Erec, there is recovery of the past. The disclosure of their stories to the khights sets off an explosion of joy on all sides. The victory over the garden has returned them to the world around them.

The purpose of the relationship between the two cousins is primarily to allow each to recover the past and thereby to recover identity. The telling of their stories also underscores the difference between Enide and her cousin. Unlike Enide, but very much like Laudine in Yvain and Guinevere in Lancelot, Enide's cousin has used her knight's prowess to reflect her success as a lady. It is the reverse of the mirror relationship between Erec and Enide, since Erec uses Enide's beauty to reflect his prowess as a knight. Enide never becomes the self-centered dominant female, however much her husband attempts to destroy her identity. Had she lost her identity, she would have been incapable of love. She would not have grieved when Erec entered the garden. She would have reserved her tears as did her cousin, for the defeat of her knight, which would signal her own defeat as a lady. Enide never loses the capacity to love her husband or her parents, despite the narrator's frequent forgetfulness. Her rediscovery of herself will be completed when she is reunited with her parents, just prior to the coronation. Erec, on the contrary, shares with Maboagrain complete isolation from his past. He refers to himself and his father in the third person. He will never return to his father. In defeat, Maboagrain has won, in that once the illusion is dispelled, he returns to the world outside the garden. Erec does not recognize his defeat. He must therefore return to Arthur.

The celebration lasts for three days, ending as they depart (6358). In sudden contrast to the joy of Brandigan, Arthur is ill and feeling alone. Time seems to have set in.[87] Then comes a messenger from "Erec et Guivret le Petit" (6379). As if the mirage of sensual ease had been dispelled forever, the Erec-Enide couple has been replaced by the Erec-Guivret couple, which sets out a joie straight for Arthur's court (6360-63). Enide has no part in this joy. In fact Enide does not reappear until she is welcomed by the queen, who has moved into the background. She who was formerly the first to hear news, the first to greet newcomers, now has to be sent for (6386-7, 6407-9). Guivret, on the other hand, is not visible during the welcoming scene. Erec did not enter armed. They changed into "lor beles robes" (6404) when they were met by Arthur's knights. Thus, according to appearances, the knight and the lady are welcomed back while the dwarf passes again unnoticed, as in the initial Yder incident.

Arthur wants to know Erec's adventures.

> Erec ancomance son conte:
> ses avantures li reconte,
> que nule n'en i antroblie.
> Mes cuidiez vos que je vos die
> quex acoisons le fist movoir?
> Naie; que bien savez le voir
> et de ice, et d'autre chose,
> si con gé la vos ai esclose: (6417-24)

Chrétien is very much aware that he has concealed the truth or that he has had his narrator keep silent in order to perplex his audience. He frustrates us with the suggestion that the answers are revealed and continues:

> li reconters me seroit griés,
> que li contes n'est mie briés,
> qui le voldroit recomancier,
> et les paroles ragencier
> si com il lor conta et dist: (6425-29)

The suggestion is that in the retelling, by rearranging the words as Erec does, Erec's motives will be made clear. The narrator has assured us that Erec left nothing out, but in fact Erec omits Guivret's part in his life, and stops short of the Joie adventure. What Erec does not recount has no significance in terms of his renown. His victory over the garden constituted the defeat of his attempt to capture forever the Arthurian illusion in the extra-fictional world. His typically abrupt departure from Brandigan is a rejection of the joy of liberation and a vain attempt to recapture the joy of illusion. Since the arrival at Brandigan, Enide and Guivret have become increasingly abstract figures. They do not appear simultaneously, but replace each other as facets of Erec's character, of his own concept of himself. For this reason they are omitted from his account of his adventures. Guivret appears at court only when Erec stipulates to the king that he will remain only if Guivret, too, will be welcomed. "And so both [Erec and Guivret] remain":

> Ensi remainnent amedui:
> li rois les retient avoec lui,
> ses tint molt chiers et enora.
> Erec a cort tant demora,
> Guivrez, et Enyde, antr'aus trois,
> que morz fu ses peres li rois,
> qui vialz ert et de grant aage. (6449-55)

They are a trinity,[88] immobilized by the stasis which their return has restored to the court. Simultaneously the court is transformed. Formerly the source of the illusions of chivalry and love, it becomes the source of the illusion of kingship. Guinevere, the arbiter of beauty and the ruler of the knight-lady relationship, becomes a secondary figure as Arthur takes the center of the stage. Gauvain is not named until the coronation scene, nor is Kay. Before entering, Erec lays down his arms, presumably forever, and is richly robed. He is making the transition from one role to another. Guivret will become simply another Arthurian knight. Enide, in one perfunctory line, will become queen. The symbols of Erec's chivalric perfection fall away as the illusion of wisdom replaces that of militancy, and the "lady" is replaced by the "queen".

Upon news of the death of King Lac, action resumes, as does time, the latter emphasized by the specific mention that it is eight days before Christmas.[89] Erec takes on his new role: he does not mourn his father openly, because grief is not proper in a king. Roques cites this as a maxim. Erec is now observing the rituals of kingship, as compared to those of knighthood. He makes one last attempt to remain within the Arthurian framework, requesting that Arthur crown him at his court. The narrator comments on the wisdom of this request (6485-87). Arthur counters with his decision to crown both Erec and Enide at Nantes. The coronation, unlike the wedding, will take place in the outside world. From this point on, Arthur changes. We see him reacting to a world hitherto unfamiliar to him. Introduced to Enide's father when Erec presents her parents to him for the first time, he does not acknowledge the introduction at first, but asks who the lady is. Informed that she is Enide's mother, Arthur ponders: "Sa mere est ele?" Suddenly he sees Enide in a new light, and compliments the parents on a daughter who has her mother's beauty and her father's noble and knightly qualities. Enide has become a whole person again. Arthur falls silent for a bit, then asks them to be seated. This passage is unique in Erec. Nowhere else has Arthur attempted to understand human relationships. Enide's joy in the company of her parents is echoed in line after line, as was the joy following the destruction of the enchanted garden, or the joy following Erec's return to Carnant with his bride (see p.66). Joy arises from the rediscovery of loved ones and of one's place in society. In this final scene, there is only one other reference to joy: Erec sees his coronation as "la granz joie" awaiting him (6639).

Erec is passing from the world of Arthurian illusion to that of political illusion. The guests are kings and counts, and sons of kings and counts, from the Plantagenet kingdom. The narrator comments on the description he must undertake:

Donc voel ge grant folie anprandre,
qui au descrivre voel antandre; (6645-6)

Folie can be taken as a literary *topos* and at the same time be accepted as descriptive of the coronation regalia. Erec's investiture is designed to give the appearance of wisdom and power, the illusion of kingship.[90]

The thrones are described first, identical in every way, with two legs in the form of leopards and two in the form of crocodiles. The leopard in the context of the narrative evokes the idea of valiance; the crocodile would seem to be the opposite of chivalric valiance, perhaps even a symbol of *recréantise*. Erec and Arthur seated on the thrones are not, as Bezzola suggests, arbiters in the struggle of good and evil, but more likely supported by two facets of Arthurian chivalry, the fact of *recréantise* and the fiction of valiance.[91] Medieval iconography frequently depicts seated figures immobilized in the *stasis* of eternal victory, the vanquished object trodden beneath their feet. The victory is eternal, but so is the struggle. Erec and Arthur lack contact with the symbols. There is nothing to indicate conflict, either between the animals or with the seated figures. The latter are detached and, more important, equal at this moment when the two illusions of chivalry and kingship dovetail.

The narrator calls upon Macrobius as his authority for the description of the quadrivium on Erec's robe. These images were to be found in many places at Chrétien's time. Why, then, Macrobius, who was not interested in robes, but in defining the moral and intellectual qualities of a man destined for leadership? To add to the incongruity, the pictures have been embroidered by four fairies "par grant san et par grant mestrie" (6683). Macrobius and the fairies seem to have equal authority. Geometry is portrayed as measuring the earth and the heavens, as would a tailor measuring a piece of cloth. Arithmetic counts the uncountable, drops of water in the sea, grains of sand, leaves in a wood; nor does she ever make mistakes, the narrator assures us (6702), or lie (6705). Music is associated with entertainment (6709-14), in no way related to Macrobius' musical harmony of the universe, which emanates from the World-Soul.[92] The figure of astronomy studies the stars to seek advice and to learn what has been and will be. John of Salisbury considers it "the great abyss of error" to believe the future can be read in the stars.[93] Chrétien is deliberately expressing over-simplified and secular views, not theological beliefs. The narrator insists on the truth of the imagery, because he believes that Erec is wise. John of Salisbury had this to say about the quadrivium:

> Intelligence dealing with the abstract is surely no useless and idle thing when thus employed, for through it the mind ascends the ladder of the liberal arts step by step to the throne of perfect wisdom. . . So the first step is to borrow the power of number from arithmetic; the second to draw upon music for the favor of proportion; the third to secure from geometry the science of mensuration; the fourth and last to attain the true position of the stars and to examine the nature of the heavenly bodies.[94]

Chrétien's images represent the concrete, not the abstract. Erec is not even up to the first rung of the ladder.

Macrobius' interest was not in the quadrivium as such, but in the associated virtues of prudence, temperance, courage and justice. He was aware that men in public office could not detach themselves from earthly concerns, and therefore established four levels of virtue each suited to a man's role in life on earth; the lowest of these are the political virtues:

> Man has political virtues because he is a social animal. By these virtues upright men devote themselves to their commonwealths, protect cities, revere parents, love their children, and cherish relatives; by these they direct the welfare of the citizens, and by these they safeguard their

> allies with anxious forethought and bind them with the liberality of their justice . . . To have political prudence one must direct all his thoughts and actions by the standard of reason, and wish for or do nothing but what is right, and have regard for human affairs as he would for divine authority. In prudence we find reason, understanding, circumspection, foresight, willingness to learn, and caution. To have political courage, one must exalt his mind above all dread of danger, fear nothing except disgrace, and bear manfully both adversity and prosperity. Courage endows one with magnanimity, confidence, composure, nobleness, constancy, endurance, and steadfastness. To have political temperance, one must strive after nothing that is base, in no instance overstepping the bounds of moderation but subduing all immodest desires beneath the yoke of reason. Temperance is accompanied by modesty, humility, self-restraint, chastity, integrity, moderation, frugality, sobriety and purity. To have political justice, one must safeguard for each man that which belongs to him. From justice comes uprightness, friendship, harmony, sense of duty, piety, love and human sympathy. By these virtues the good man is first made lord of himself and then ruler of the state, and is just and prudent in his regard for human welfare, never forgetting his obligations.[95]

Obviously there is no relationship between Macrobius' concept of the ruler and Erec.[96] It is safe to assume that if Chrétien's audience lacked detailed knowledge of Macrobius' Commentary, they were certainly aware of the incongruity of the reference to a work which expounded the vanity and brevity of earthly glory and kingly power. Chrétien's constant reference to "kings and counts" comes into sharp focus within this context as does Erec's goal of kingship. Erec, like all other kings and counts, is a hollow shell of appearances. The apotheosis is ironic.

Not content to let the Macrobius reference stand alone, Chrétien has the robe lined with fur from some fantastic multi-coloured beast which eats only fish, cinnamon and cloves. The garment, which represents wisdom on the outside, is frankly illusory within.

The crowns brought forth so dazzle the crowd with their brilliance that all are momentarily blinded, even Arthur, who is dazzled but still sees and rejoices "qu'il les vit si cleres et beles" (6791).[97] Arthur is enjoying the transition from one illusion to another. The scepter is made of one emerald carved with figures of every living creature. It is handed to Arthur, who regards it in wonderment, then quickly hands it to Erec. Again we see Arthur reacting to a new setting. Erec is now king, his destiny fulfilled:

> or fu rois si com il dut estre;
> puis ont Enyde coronee. (6824-5)

Enide's coronation is the destiny her parents saw for her, and they are characteristically named only now, at the end of the romance. As they go to the church for mass, the narrator tells us that never before had so many nobles been assembled in one church. There was no room left for any common man. At each of the five hundred tables set up for the feast there was at least one king, duke or count and a hundred knights. The narrator withdraws, leaving us to imagine some fifty thousand men engaged in nothing more elevating than eating. Erec must now engage the struggle to maintain the illusion outside the protection of the adventurous forest.

Once the romance is understood to reveal the folly of the Arthurian ideal and of respect for wealth and rank where nobility of character is lacking, Chrétien's prologue may be viewed as something more than conventional remarks concerning the superiority of the author's tale over previous disjointed and distorted versions.

> Li vilains dit an son respit
> que tel chose a l'an an despit
> qui molt valt mialz que l'an ne cuide; (1-3)

The first ironic comment lies in the insinuation that the _vilain_ knows better than the kings and counts who enjoyed previous accounts of Erec. On another level, these lines refer to Erec, who scorned the love of an unbelievably loyal lady, preferring illusion to reality, false values to real ones.

The opening lines are followed by an admonition:

> por ce fet bien qui son estuide
> atorne a bien quel que il l'ait
> car qui son estuide antrelait,
> tost i puet tel chose teisir
> qui molt vandroit puis a pleisir. (4-8)

Ostensibly discussing his own efforts to omit nothing which will provide greater enjoyment for the reader,[98] Chrétien uses the third person, warning the reader to apply himself carefully to the text, for otherwise he may miss the point. The key word is *teisir*, which is associated with *celer* throughout the text. Enide's fault is speaking out. The narrator, taking Erec's view of the matter, feels that she is wrong in so doing. He uses words to reflect illusory values, to enhance the Arthurian standpoint, and to conceal fact. The entire romance is woven out of half-truths, double meanings, ambiguities, and silences. Because so much stress is placed on what is not said by the narrator, this romance is much more difficult than is *Yvain*, in which the hero's thoughts, whether misguided or otherwise, are transmitted either by direct speech or by the narrator. It is possible to evaluate the tone of what is explicit far more easily than to interpret what appears to be an extension of *significatio per abscisionem*, in which the speaker, in this case the narrator, does not "pursue his thought to its inevitable conclusion", or *significatio per similitudinem*, in which an analogue is cited but not amplified, leaving the conclusion to be interpreted.[99] Comparison of word and deed, of contradictory statements, juxtaposition of actions or events and direct discourse most frequently reveal the author's ironic intentions, which are for the most part directed against the narrator or his gullibility and thereby against those who believe in the Arthurian ideal.

In the next few lines, Chrétien is clearly referring to himself in the third person, telling the reader that one must put thought and effort into expressing oneself well and teaching well; that is why his story has

> une molt bele conjointure
> par qu'an puet prover et savoir
> que cil ne fet mie savoir
> qui s'escïence n'abandone
> tant con Dex la grasce l'an done:
> d'Erec, le fil Lac est li contes, . . . (14-19)

He has added something which makes the story "worth more than one would think" (3), and which proves that there is no wisdom in not using reason or knowledge so long as God so grants you the power. Since the next line continues with the hero's name, one is entitled to assume that Erec did not use his God-given faculties to the best advantage. Chrétien concludes with the boast that his story will be remembered "tant con durra crestïantez" (25). The reference to God's grace and to Christianity, along with the first reference to kings and counts (20), places the reader in a contemporary setting evocative of concepts of personal and royal responsibility in word and deed within the process of time (durra). Against this background, Chrétien begins his story in which Arthur's court epitomizes human folly in general and the error of believing in appearances in particular. The conclusion returns the reader once again to the world of contemporary king and counts, with Arthur as the specific link between the locus amoenus of fictional illusions and the illusion of the mystique of kingship.

Exteriorized, Arthur's court intervenes in Erec's life to give credibility to his renown or to the role he undertakes to play. Through Arthur, Erec becomes knight, husband, and finally, with knightly perfection supposedly achieved, king. Arthur's praise or pleasure gives sanction to these various roles. On another level, however, Arthur is Erec's fiction, Erec's self-concept, and the only means at Erec's disposal of satisfying himself of his own greatness. The court has at all times represented Erec's inner self. Its recréantise is his own. Its image of the lady as a symbol of valiance, his own. The praise bestowed upon him at the tournament is his own view of what he has finally achieved in gaining an amie. The court "hunts" for renown twice, as does Erec in his two quests. Erec does not live "in Arthur's court". He lives within the illusion of his own greatness. The outside world, as represented by his father and his wife, or his own knights at Carnant, negates his achievements by not recognizing in his "lady" a sign of positive moral worth. He, in turn, negates the outside world in the first series of adventures, returning to Arthur's court to be vested with temporary illusory replacements for that world. He then reconstructs fiction out of fact, creating for himself a sur-reality in the hope that he may enjoy Enide as a sign of prowess, and also as a source of physical gratification. He had the opportunity at Pointurie and at Brandigan to retain Enide in this latter role. In his mind, the Joie promised the fulfillment of the double goal. With the destruction of the garden, he might have returned to the outside world as did Maboagrain, but he would have lost the signs of his chivalry, Guivret and Enide, and found himself back where he started, with Enide as wife. Instead, he returns to the haven of his illusions, to "the court", where his self-concept is secure. The court, for Erec, is a total, unfragmented image of himself as a successful knight and, when the time comes, as king. The link between the individual illusion and the collective illusion is made by the presence of Arthur's court at all crucial moments in Erec's life, when his illusion is accepted by others and his self-concept substantiated by the belief of others in that self-concept. However, illusion does not necessarily depend upon the presence of Arthur. Maboagrain and his lady, and Enide's father are misguided without ever having encountered the court. The tales recounted about knights and ladies, or about the nobility of nobles are ubiquitous, just as Arthur's court is presented as ever-moving.

Arthur is portrayed as the focal point for various fictional concepts related to each other only in that Chrétien has specifically associated them with Arthur's court. Enide's father foolishly believes that wealth and rank imply nobility of character. Erec and Maboagrain, the latter independent from Arthur's court, try to live by concepts of love and chivalry which have no social context. The Plantagenet powers all gather around for their segment of the illusion, that of kingship.[100] Fiction overflows its boundaries, infusing imaginations at various levels of society with words which have no referential value in a world situated within time and space. Always granting that Chrétien is writing works which are fiction in the literal sense from beginning to end, there is no difficulty in distinguishing between the figurative fiction and the figurative reality. The final scene, with its deliberately contemporary setting, leaves little doubt that Chrétien is commenting on the uses, or perhaps rather the abuses, of fiction in a world which is rendered no less "real", figuratively speaking, by the presence of Arthur himself. Arthur is still, on the symbolic level, a manifestation of the active belief in him and in his fiction which pervades society at large.

NOTES

[1] Z. P. Zaddy summarizes the varying points of view on major areas of contention in *Chrétien Studies* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1973), pp. 1-59. The traditional view of *Erec* may be found in the following studies: Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris: Hatier, 1968); Myrra Borodine, *La femme et l'amour au XII^{e} siècle* (1909; reprinted Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1967); Gustave Cohen, *Un grand romancier d'amour et d'aventure au XII^{e} siècle* (1931; reprinted Mayenne: Joseph Floch, 1948); U. T. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970); Helen C. R. Laurie, *Two Studies in Chrétien de Troyes* (Geneva: Droz, 1972). Each of the above contains a chapter on *Erec et Enide*. See also Gaston Paris, "Compte rendu de *Erec und Enide* von Chrestian von Troyes," *Rom* 20 (1891): 148-66; W. A. Nitze, "The Romance of Erec, son of Lac," *MP* 11 (1914): 445-89; E. Hoepffner, "*Matière et sens* dans le roman d'*Erec et Enide*," *Archivum Romanicum* 18 (1934): 433-50.

[2] Reto R. Bezzola, *Le sens de l'aventure et de l'amour* (Paris: La Jeune Parque, 1947), p. 137. Further page references will be given in the body of the text.

[3] These have been subject to criticism. See Jean Misrahi's review of *Le sens de l'aventure*, *RP* 4 (1950-51): 348-61. See also his "Symbolism and Allegory in Arthurian Romance," *RP* 17 (1963-64): 555-69; Morton W. Bloomfield, "Symbolism in Medieval Literature," *MP* 56 (1958): 73-81; Peter Haidu, *Lion-queue-coupée* (Geneva: Droz, 1972), pp. 11-17.

[4] "In the Pythagorean system, the numbers five and six were both associated with the idea of marriage as being either the sum or the product of the first feminine 2 and the first masculine 3; and, as would naturally be supposed, the number five, being odd, was considered the masculine marriage number, while the even number six was the feminine and was indeed called the number of Venus by Capella (De Nuptiis, 7)." *Structural Arithmetic Metaphor in the Oxford "Roland"* by Eleanor Webster Bulatkin (Ohio State University Press, 1973), p. 15. If the number

five hundred was chosen by Chrétien with the Pythagorean system in mind, then the choice was made for ironic purposes since marriage and the Arthurian world are not compatible. Bezzola, *Le sens de l'aventure*, suggests with regard to the five robbers that the number five represents "l'être physique (les cinq sens, la richesse, le matérialisme)," p. 162. This interpretation might also have ironic application to Arthur's court.

[5] The verb changes perhaps significantly:

> A la prise del cerf einçois
> vint que nus des autres li rois;
> le blanc cerf *ont desfet et pris*, . . . (279-81)

It would seem that Arthur was supposed to choose the most beautiful lady himself, by some tacit agreement.

[6] "Biax niés Gauvains, conselliez m'an,
> sauve m'annor et ma droiture,
> que je n'ai de la noise cure." (308-10)

Roques translates "droiture" as "justice". A reflection is being cast on Arthur's ability to rule, even in his own mind.

[7] Lorenza Maranini considers Arthur's court a "mondo ambiguo, orgoglioso, anarchico"; Arthur himself is "dolorosamente impotente a fare osservare senza disordini le buone 'costumes' dei tempi antichi", "*Cavalleria e Cavalieri* nel mondo di Chrétien de Troyes," Mél. Jean Frappier, II: 738.

[8] Bezzola did not see the discrepancy between word and deed, p. 133.

[9] *The Statesman's Book of John of Salisbury*, translated by John Dickinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), Bk. IV, ch. 2, pp. 6-8. The judicial duel in Yvain is discussed in a later chapter.

[10] John of Salisbury, Dickinson, Book VII, ch. 19, p. 297. This passage leads into a discussion of those who seek not truth or knowledge but only the appearance of virtue; sloth and ambition are equated.

[11] Appearances are also the foundation of the illusion in *Cligès*. Alis wishes to keep the crown, the symbol of royal power, while his brother rules. A ruler by appearances only, he is also a husband merely by virtue of the marriage contract since a magic potion prevents him from possessing his wife except in dream. Fénice, the wife who does not want to resemble Iseut, maintains appearances by undergoing a simulated death and burial, shedding her identity as the wife of Alis so that she may, supposedly without dishonour, become the mistress of her husband's nephew. Thus in *Cligès* also appearances are synonymous with illusion. See Haidu, *Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troyes* (Geneva: Droz, 1968), pp. 106-12 and D. W. Robertson, "Chrétien's *Cligés* and the Ovidian Spirit," *CL* 7 (1955): 41.

[12] These two episodes are good examples of interlace: the counts' motives are caricatures of Erec's own motives in marrying Enide.

[13] P.-Y. Badel, discussing the qualities of the courtly knight in romance literature, remarks: "Le noble a la noblesse du coeur, la maîtrise de ses sentiments. Il est généreux envers l'adversaire vaincu." *Introduction à la vie du moyen âge*, Collection Etudes Supérieures (Bordas: Mouton, 1969), p. 77.

[14] Frappier suggests that Erec obtained Enide by a very courteous form of the "don contraignant". His promise to marry her was made to reward the vavasour and to safeguard Enide's reputation, which "ne sera sauvegardée que si la jeune fille accompagne Erec à titre de fiancée et non d'amie." *Amour courtois et table ronde* (Geneva: Droz, 1973), p. 228. He sees no hypocrisy in Erec's representations to Enide's family.

[15] Alfred Adler, "Sovereignty as the Principle of Unity in Chrétien's *Erec*," *PMLA* 60 (1945): 918-19, comments on the disparity between Erec's high standing at court and his behaviour.

[16] The hunt in *Erec* is associated with the attainment of the Arthurian ideal. Here Erec does not take part. He will return to Arthur's forest

court midway through his adventures as the quarry of the hunt (discussed pp. 96-98). It is as a hunter that he leaves Guivret's castle to be intercepted by the *Joie* adventure (5314-18).

[17] Outstanding for their beauty are the first count, who tries to lure Enide away from Erec (3223-36), and Maboagrain, the lover in the enchanted garden (5847-55). Erec's beauty is intensified as he approaches this last adventure (5445-74).

[18] Vernon J. Harward's study of legendary and literary dwarfs provides tempting parallels. Traditionally the dwarf might be truculent or gracious (p. 19). When truculent he frequently had a giant kinsman (p. 58). With the transfer of the dwarf into romance, the giant kinsman tended to disappear but the dwarf was frequently divided into two characters, the knight of normal stature and the dwarf servant. The dwarf might be abusive but the knight did the fighting (p. 60). There is no doubt that Guivret is drawn from the Celtic dwarf tradition (pp. 62-73 and pp. 120-123). *The Dwarfs of Arthurian Romance and Celtic Tradition* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958). Maboagrain's huge stature is reminiscent of the giant kinsman tradition. Yder would follow the typical romance pattern. Harward does not suggest that Guivret became Erec's dwarf.

[19] Adler, "Sovereignty," pp. 929-30, discusses the similarity between Yder's dwarf and Guivret, seeing in the former a prefiguration of the latter.

[20] Even exteriorized the dwarf tends to be overlooked: Guinevere does not see Yder's dwarf. Her attention is focussed on the knight and the lady (149-52, 204). Her maid considers the dwarf of small account because he is so little (178).

[21] When Yder, defeated, comes to Arthur's court Keu sights the arrival at a distance, seeing first the knight who caused the queen "si grant enui" (1096). The image appears like a picture out of focus as he adds: "Ce m'est avis que il sont troi" (1097). In recalling the forest incident to the queen, he speaks only of the dwarf's actions (1110-12), saying that he has sighted a knight,

"et, se mi oel ne m'ont manti,
une pucele a avoec li,
et si m'est vis qu'avoec ax vient
li nains qui l'escorgiee tient,
dom Erec reçut la colee." (1119-23)

There is no doubt about the knight, but the lady and the dwarf are almost optical illusions.

[22] Maboagrain is depicted as of extraordinary size and monstrous in his capacity to kill without remorse. He has no exteriorized dwarf (see note 18). Since his lady specifically demands that he waste his life in the killing of others to retain her love, the dwarf-figure is therefore an integral part of her character. Enide never loses either her love for Erec or her concern for his safety. Therefore Guivret must incite Erec to undertake the Joie adventure, for Enide would never do so.

[23] Frederick Goldin discusses the lady as the mirror of the lover's image of his own perfection, but points out that she does not reflect prowess as brute force. Prowess alone is not a chivalric ideal. "It is when strength is expended in the struggle for moral perfection, and in a style demanded by the consciousness of class, that it becomes a true courtly virtue." The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 105.

[24] Adler, "Sovereignty," p. 921: "The nature of the duel with Yder is such that the superiority of Enide's beauty is made dependent upon Erec's sword. That is as Erec must have wished it. For although it has been said that la beauté se constate et ne se impute pas, Erec's present need is to experience beauty . . . not as existing in its own right but by virtue of his own assertion of that beauty - an assertion dependent entirely upon his own will." Adler perceives in this one episode the relationship between beauty and knighthood but does not extend his perception to other episodes or discuss the implications.

[25] Chrétien introduced this passage by playing with numbers. So many knights are assembled, says the narrator, "que je n'an sai nomer le disme, le treziesme ne le quinzisme" (1665-66).

[26] Gustave Cohen says of Chrétien's knights in general: "Ils sont le chevalier, plus qu'ils ne sont eux-mêmes, ils apparaissent comme l'idéal un peu abstrait proposé par le romancier aux adolescents de son temps." p. 505.

[27] Viewed in this light, the sparrow-hawk contest is a fore-shadowing of the joie episode, in which Erec hopes to win eternal bliss with Enide.

[28] There is some doubt at court that Erec will win the contest (1141-66). Doubt in Erec appears contrapuntally throughout the romance as he wins victory upon victory. It constantly provokes the reader to question the validity of the victories and of Erec's apparent renown.

[29] When Erec obtains Enide, the narrator says:

> Erec lieement la reçut,
> or a quanque il li estut. (679-80)

[30] Once the contestants are in the square, the dwarf disappears from the narrative to be replaced by the count wielding a whip to keep back the crowd. Brutality is transferred to the one who stages the contest. This is perhaps a reflection upon Arthur himself.

[31] Guinevere assumes that Erec fought for Enide:

> "Sire, si con je cuit et croi,
> bien doit venir a cort de roi
> qui par ses armes puet conquerre
> si bele dame en autre terre." (1721-24)

This comment will later provoke Erec into creating an incident whereby he will win Enide in "another land" that is to say, outside the court.

[32] This passage fore-shadows Erec's persistent search for joie. Ultimately he misconstrues the meaning of the joie de la cort, assuming that victory will bring him the joy he seeks.

[33] This method of affirming Enide's noble lineage and future rank is amusing but significant since Erec's horse is associated in his mind with his knighthood (see pp. 119-21). His attachment to this

animal indicates his unchanging attitude towards his role as knight while Enide's varied mounts seem to reflect her constantly shifting roles throughout the adventure.

[34] The cost of the robe is made clear to Enide:

> "Ma dameisele, ce bliaut,
> qui plus de .c. mars d'argent vaut,
> vos comant cest cheinse changier: (1615-17)

[35] After the Joie combat Enide listens to her cousin's tale of unmarried love, and prefaces her own story with one fact essential to her: "Bele cosine, il m'espousa," (6242). Only then does she tell of events prior to the wedding.

[36] For example see Frappier, Amour courtois, p. 72.

[37] These lines present a disputed reading but in all manuscripts except R (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, fonds français, 1450), which deletes them altogether, they compare Erec's victory over Yder with Tristan's over Morholt.

[38] Yder and Morholt might be compared in so far as Morholt was felled by a blow to the head which split his skull; Yder received a similar wound (975-77) but was not felled. He was pushed over.

[39] Ferdinand Lot, "Nouvelles études sur la provenance du cycle arthurien: les noces d'Erec et d'Enide," Rom 46 (1920): 42, and Cohen, Un grand romancier, p. 130, comment on the humourous nature of the guest list but neither explores the matter further.

[40] Whenever the narrator insists that something is true, it is almost invariably an indication that Chrétien is embroidering upon the illusory. The narrator deceives the reader in the same way that the court deceives the world, primarily by the use of words affirming a reality where none exists. This is a rather blatant example of a technique used throughout the narrative.

[41] Within the court the dwarf figure is tamed and accepted except in the case of Kay who is accepted

but never tamed. Kay may be considered a dwarf figure in so far as he is the epitome of irrational belligerence. The young men might symbolize the knights at Arthur's court who 'hunt' for renown; the old men are perhaps symbolic of Arthur.

[42] The coronation guest list on the contrary is made up of representatives of Plantagenet powers.

[43] Wolfgang Brand, *Chrétien de Troyes* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1972), pp. 34-41 discusses the transition from the *premiers vers* to the homecoming and sees parallels between Erec's return to Arthur's court after the *premiers vers* and at the end of the romance. His observations, however acute, are always coloured by his view that the second division in the text commences with Erec's uxoriousness so that the romance proceeds as two related and successful quests for perfection.

[44] Bezzola, p. 88. Hoepffner, "*Matière et sens*," pp. 433-434.

[45] Enide uses the same words, "con mar fus", when she believes Erec dead after the giant episode (4599). She employs "tu" on one other occasion, to curse Guivret for unhorsing the wounded Erec (4991). The form is elsewhere used between enemies to express mutual contempt or by the victor speaking to the vanquished.

[46] Enide will repeatedly reproach herself this utterance (2581-85, 3110-12, 4585-95, 4599-4613) until the reconciliation. She tries to repair the damage by changing to the second person plural, "tant que je dis que mar i fustes" (2571), but it is too late.

[47] Enide makes this negation explicit in her subsequent speech:

> "Or vos an estuet consoil prandre,
> que vos puissiez ce blasme estaindre
> et vostre premier los ataindre,
> car trop vos ai oï blasmer." (2562-65)

[48] "Onques nel vos osai mostrer;
sovantes foiz, quant m'an sovient,
d'angoisse plorer me covient:

> si grant angoisse orainz en oi
> que garde prandre ne m'an soi,
> tant que je dis que mar i fustes." (3566-71)

[49] The symbolic possibilities of the leopard are discussed in notes 60 and 91.

[50] Haidu, *Lion-queue-coupée*, p. 19.

[51] After the giant episode, Erec tells Cadoc that he will go on his way "toz seus" (4482). At no time does he mention Enide to Cadoc or the lady. He has abandoned her mentally and physically as both wife and *amie*.

[52] ". . . ces magnanimes brigands qui, embusquées par groupes de trois ou de cinq, ont toujours cependant la générosité et le bon goût de n'attaquer le chevalier errant que, un à un, pour se faire battre congrûment en toute loyauté . . ." Cohen, p. 157.

[53] Bezzola, *Le sens de l'amour*, sees Erec's victory over the first three robbers as symbolic of his victory over *recréantise*; the defeat of the next five symbolizes a victory over *convoitise*; the defeat of the count is a victory over *envie* (pp. 162-65).

[54] Erec's faith in his wife is clearly indicated:

> Or ot Erec que bien se prueve
> vers lui sa fame lëaumant: (3480-1)

Later (3751-55) when he threatens her again, the narrator tells us that he does not intend to carry out his threats because he loves Enide and knows that she loves him. Nevertheless the vestige of punishment remains when he feigns handing over to her the horse belonging to Gauvain which he has taken from Kay. The love and loyalty of the wife (*fame*, above) are recognized by Erec but they are not what he is seeking, which is the adoration of the *amie*.

[55] A path led from Arthur's adventurous forest to Laluth. In returning to his father's kingdom Erec moves away from his Arthurian destiny but not away from Arthur's influence since he interprets the charge of *recréantise* as a call to adventure, not to his duties within the kingdom. With the onset of the adventures Erec begins to follow a path from

which there seems to be no escape. After the encounter with the robber-knights Erec proceeds to this point where he is met by the squire almost as if he were expected. No explanation is given for the squire's approach with cheese and wine in this manuscript although Foerster's edition explains that he is taking food to men in the fields. No explanation is given for his assumption that Erec would not wish to leave the path. He himself lures the count to them by extolling Erec's beauty. The escape from the count leads directly across Guivret's drawbridge, and from there into Arthur's forest camp. The next two adventures fall as naturally across his path. Upon leaving the castle of the count of Limors Erec advances between hedgerows toward Guivret and his advancing host of one thousand men. For once Erec hopes to avoid combat but there is no escape. Guivret leads Erec along the "droit chemin" (5320) to the Joie adventure where his curiosity lures him into combat against a knight who is, like himself, a model of Arthurian perfection. All through the adventures Erec in victory is defeating some aspect of his own reality. There is no reality left by the time of his arrival in Brandigan. In victory he defeats his own illusions. There is almost tragic inevitability about the path which he follows throughout as the process of self-destruction is accomplished. The "droit chemin" in Yvain will be discussed in a later chapter.

[56] There is no suggestion that Erec is merely pretending to be unaware of the count's intentions toward Enide, although this may very well be the case. The narrator does not allow such a suggestion to infiltrate his account. Later, in the de Limors episode, there is such discrepancy between Erec's concern for Enide and his previous nonchalance that it is possible to consider his lack of perception deliberate.

[57] It is perhaps significant that the count arrived mounted on one of Erec's captured horses, the one Erec had given to the squire (3252-53). He has already taken over one of the symbols of Erec's prowess. He is now attempting to possess the other sign of prowess, the lady.

[58] For the count of Limors, see lines 4663-66, 4714-28. Since he is the antithesis of knighthood he does not offer to make Enide amie, but "contesse

et dame" (4666), to hold half his land provided she do his will (4726-28).

[59] Bezzola, p. 185. Frappier, Chrétien de Troyes, p. 67. Borodine, p. 68. Cohen, p. 151.

[60] For the hunt of the white stag, Arthur roused his household from sleep (69-74). Erec for some unexplained reason was late and had to catch up with the queen in great haste. He, in turn, wakes up everyone for the sparrow-hawk contest (696-99) and for the departure the following day to return to Arthur's court with Enide (1409-15). But the morning of the crisis he sleeps while Enide grieves over his lost glory: "Cil dormi et cele veilla" (2475). That night Enide has no sleep at all. She looks after the horses won in combat while Erec sleeps soundly: "cil dormi, et cele veilla, onques la nuit ne someilla" (3093-94). The following night, Erec again sleeps while she watches over him (3434-38). This time she wakes him. He has been sleeping "seürement" (3454), which recalls his command when they first set out that she should ride ahead "tot a seür" (2771) thereby indicating that he would look after her. Once they return to Arthur's court both sleep but Erec is up and preparing the horses early. Enide rises only after he is armed. When he is fulfilling his function as an Arthurian knight he is awake. His sleep represents the imperfection of the knight who has neither his lady nor his dwarf. Upon awakening from the "sleep" during which Enide is abused by the count of Limors he recuperates both, achieving Arthurian perfection. It may be recalled that Erec armed himself for the adventures seated upon the image of a leopard. The panther of the bestiaries is a sleeping beast. When satiated, he sleeps for three days. On the third day he rises and draws all other animals to him with his perfumed breath. Only one animal, the dragon, fears him and stays away. The panther's sleeping and rising represents Christ's harrowing of hell and the resurrection. Erec's sleep lasted roughly three days. In rising from the "dead" he drew to him Enide and Guivret. It is possible that Chrétien used the theme of sleep with the bestiary tradition in mind. See The Book of Beasts, edited by T. H. White (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), pp. 14-17; Philippe de Thaün, Le bestiaire (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), pp. 18-22. For the leopard and the panther as the same beast, see White's Book of Beasts, p. 13.

[61] Erec's perfection at this point is represented as the fulfillment of knightly perfection prefigured in the *premiers vers* by Yder, the lady and the dwarf.

[62] Erec and Enide cross the bridge (*passent*) but Guivret sees only Erec (*Quant il vit Erec trespassant*, 3667). Guivret never "sees" Enide. At their next encounter he will not recognize her. It should be noted that Guivret is *toz seus* (3688) as is Erec. Ostensibly this means that he is without armed companions but it is significant because Guivret has no lady as a sign of prowess. His prowess is demonstrated in action, not in image.

[63] Erec has reached the same impasse which Chrétien exposed so clearly in *Yvain*. The hero in both romances has an interfering wife, and is bent on showing prowess theoretically for the wife's sake but in fact for self-esteem. The ring which Laudine gave Yvain to protect him was an affront to his *amour-propre*. In both cases the wife is conveniently forgotten. Yvain remembers his love and goes insane. Erec proceeds from one state of oblivion to a deeper one.

[64] Dinner that evening consists of fish and fruit, an unlikely meal for a king out hunting in a forest full of game.

[65] It should be recalled that when Erec and Guivret first fought, they were both badly injured: "Andui avons mestier de mire," Guivret remarked (3878) and offered to take Erec back with him for both to receive medical attention (3879-82). The next day they meet again. Guivret is in vibrant health, knocking Erec from his horse in one blow. Erec would seem to have been weakened by Morgue's magic ointment. He received only one blow during the combat against the giants, and it was parried by the shield. His collapse was brought about by the heat and the weight of his arms (4552-55), which caused his wounds to re-open. In *Yvain* also the hero was treated with Morgue's ointment, to cure him of insanity. There was nothing physically wrong with him until an overdose so weakened him that he was unable to walk (*Yvain*, 3032-37).

[66] It is more plausible to assume that Kay's unarmed state had nothing to do with Erec's generosity. Erec has just wounded one count armed like Kay with only lance and shield and will kill another, totally unarmed and at dinner. It is more likely that Erec in recognizing Kay also recognized an ineffectual knight. I assume that the purpose of the combat is to give Erec a semblance of generosity whereas in fact he shows himself to be completely self-centered throughout the romance. He never displays kindness or compassion. Any display of generosity is suspect. The very lengthy passage describing the fulfillment of his promise to Enide's family belies any notion of spontaneous largesse or of feelings of gratitude or respect; repeated use of the word "promise" makes it clear that because a knight is expected to be true to his word, Erec is attending to this aspect of his reputation.

[67] C. S. Lewis, The Discarded Image (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1964), pp. 127-28.

[68] "Nous sommes ici plus près d'un gab . . . de la Chanson du Pêlerinage de Charlemagne, que de la réalité." Cohen, p. 147.

[69] Bezzola, p. 185. See also Cohen, p. 159.

[70] This is the theme of Yvain as will be discussed in a later chapter.

[71] The pun on "Li morz" and "Limors" creates a fusion of identity between Enide's two husbands: Limors, now dead, and li morz now resurrected but no longer in his own mind a husband, and therefore in this role still li morz. The same pun occurs in lines 5028-30, quoted on p. 126.

[72] The conventions of romance may be said to operate within a system of metaphor whereby knights and ladies represent qualities or aspects of each other without need for explanation, justification or manifestatio. Thus, in the premiers vers, Enide's beauty purports to represent Erec's prowess. The contrapuntal theme of failure is deduced from juxtaposition of fiction and fact. The latter is understood from the metonymic plot development which informs us that Enide's beauty is, on the contrary, the source of Erec's recréantise. Therefore Enide,

as a *persona* on the metonymic level must look after Erec's horse or horses which in turn, on the level of metaphor come to represent his status as a knight. In winning Enide from de Limors, Erec wins his lady, the sign which designates him as a perfect knight, but he wants to return to the state of uxoriousness in which Enide represents his *recréantise*. Since Enide, as a sign cannot, therefore, sustain the image of prowess, her metaphorical function must be totally transferred to the horse. She no longer functions metaphorically or metonymically as the guardian of Erec's honour even though she has become the amie as Erec wished. With the fusion of Erec-Enide-Guivret, Guivret assumes responsibility for Erec's renown. He may be said to represent honour and Enide, love. The metaphor of convention thus regains its equilibrium.

[73] Adler, p. 927: ". . . the *forfet* may be understood as the *parole* itself which Enide has *mesdite*; but the very use of such a concrete term as *forfet* suggests a wish on Erec's part to explain his disproportionate resentment as the result of a now exploded suspicion of something more like a *forfet* than a *parole*." I agree that in Erec's eyes, Enide's *parole* developed the proportions of a *forfet*, but not, as Adler says, because he suspected her of infidelity. Her fault lay in casting doubt on his image of himself.

[74] Enide's name has never been satisfactorily explained. See R. Bromwich, "Celtic Dynastic Themes and the Breton Lays," *EC* 9 (1961): 465. U. T. Holmes makes a tempting suggestion: "Customarily in early Welsh material a chieftain is addressed as Eneit "soul". This makes one wonder whether Chrétien could have known this fact and transferred the use of Eneit "soul" into a term of address for a lady." *Chrétien de Troyes*, p. 69.

[75] It is interesting to note that as Guivret is transformed from an isolated dwarf-figure into an interiorized concept of honour, the exteriorized *persona* becomes part of a family unit with a home apart from his tower near the head of the drawbridge. Tamed and made gracious he is placed within a socially acceptable context. He is, however, isolated from his family as was Enide in following Erec. On

another level there may be an intended evocation of the two Marys who first saw the resurrected Christ.

[76] Enide is referred to once more as *fame*, when Arthur says he will crown them both at Nantes (6492). References to her as *fame* during her rescue by Erec (4821, 4825, 4879) are ironic since she has been married to the count of Limors and Erec no longer considers her his wife. One other use of the word is found in Guivret's speech to Erec:

> et ma dame ausi mangera,
> vostre fame, qui molt a hui
> por vos esté an grant enui;
> mes bien vos en estes vangiez. (5114-17)

This is a deliberately ambiguous passage, suggesting obliquely that Erec has taken vengeance upon his wife.

[77] Bezzola, p. 188. Cohen, p. 151, sees the romance concluded with the reconciliation. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes*, p. 71, considers the last four adventures superfluous and would have preferred to see the romance end with Erec's return to Arthur's forest court.

[78] Chrétien uses the resurrection theme similarly in *Cligès*. Fénice's mock death, burial and resurrection create for her the illusion that she has cast off her former identity as the wife of Alis and is therefore not committing adultery. The illusion finally crumbles exposing her as the Iseut she did not wish to be. Jehan's tower in *Cligès* performs the same isolating function as does the magic garden at Brandigan. Yvain, on the other hand, is resurrected from insanity to become a rational member of society. *Lancelot* contains a parody of the crucifiction and of the harrowing of hell. Chrétien leaves Lancelot walled up in a high tower, symbolic of his inner isolation or death. Godefroi de Leigny's conclusion contains a rather ambiguous resurrection.

[79] Chrétien used this technique before when Erec revised his promise to Enide's parents, pp. 41-43.

[80] Enide's multi-coloured palfrey would seem to belong to the Irish dwarf tradition and would be then a fairy animal. Harward, *Dwarfs*, p. 67 and p. 111.

81 For various aspects of joy, see Frappier, Amour courtois, p. 9. Joy may be the woman herself. See also Moshé Lazar, Amour courtois et "fin' amors" (Paris: Librairie Klincksieck, 1964), pp. 107-117.

82 This reference to "king or count" has its opposite reflection. Evrain is informed that the new arrival seems to be a king or count (5494-98). As Erec is drawn to the adventure, Evrain would seem to recognize in Erec a candidate for the adventure. He immediately goes out to welcome him personally.

83 As Erec appears to be the focal point of all those in his cortège, the amplification through par sanblant, cuident and croient indicates another transposition from appearance to belief.

84 Erec is a saviour-figure, like Lancelot. Both seek a joy which is material, fleeting and very much of this earth. Both isolate themselves from the world around them and the world above them. Both pass over rushing waters into a country which represents a form of death. Both are saviours only in the sense that they liberate people from self-imposed illusion.

85 The classical relationship between eros and thanatos has not been changed since beauty is the equivalent of eros in Erec.

86 Mario Roques' edition of Erec contains a list of "Proverbes, maximes, dictons et comparaisons" found in the text, p. 281. His distinctions between proverbs and maxims have not been followed here for the sake of simplicity, since Chrétien is using ritualistic speech to correspond to ritualistic behaviour, in which context the distinctions have little importance.

87 Arthur's good health was commented on earlier, when Erec and Enide first came to court from Laluth: "a cele ore estoit bien heitiez" (1528). At that time the court was flourishing.

88 Goldin "translates" St. Augustine's concept of the Trinity into courtly terms (pp. 207-58) to provide a frame of reference for the courtly lover's love of the image of his perfection: "The courtly

man requires a visible and immediate sanction by the ideal, and to this high office he exalts the lady. For an ideal is not merely an image of what might be: it also enjoins us to make the image real . . . Thus the knight externalizes the human trinity to form a new one that is more social, more secular. He embodies the word in the lady and she becomes crucial to his identity. He can never more be sufficient to himself; he requires another to complete him. He takes on the rôle of the nosse, of an actual condition that needs to be formulated and perfected. The aspiring knight, the lady who is the custodian of his ideal and the love that binds them together, are now a single being." The Mirror of Narcissus, p. 238. Like Narcissus, the courtly man will perish if his mirror fails him (p. 253).

[89] The exact length of time before Christmas varies with the manuscript.

[90] "Clothes may provide an indispensable social role, and may at times be thought of as providing a total definition of the man who wears them, especially if he is a king, but there is also the recognition that the man and his clothing are not finally identical. One cannot live entirely within a ritual." Dean Frye, "The Context of Lear's Unbuttoning," ELH 32 (1965): 20.

[91] The leopard is commonly symbolic of fierté, fierceness or valiance as in the Chanson de Roland:

> Quant Rollant veit que la bataille serat,
> Plus se fait fiers que leon ne leupart.
> (1110-11)

ed. F. Whitehead (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962)

This example is cited by Bezzola, p. 261, to support an unequivocal interpretation of valiance, p. 147: ". . . il s'assied 'sur l'image d'un léopard' reprenant par ce geste possession de sa virilité, de son élan guerrier, et il contemple ses armes en face de lui prêtes à être saisies, déjà mises en contact avec lui par le tapis qui les unit." Concerning the leopards and the crocodiles which form the legs of the two thrones at the coronation, Bezzola says, p. 237: "Le léopard, symbole de la vaillance, est opposé au principe de la rage diabolique, du mal, représenté par le crocodile." I accept Bezzola's idea of valiance for the leopard but would qualify it as Arthurian valiance, more illusory than real. By the time of the coronation Erec has passed beyond the conflict between the illusion of valiance and the fact of recréantise. The latter seems the most likely explanation for the crocodile: "Hypocritical, dissolute and avaricious people have the same nature as this brute - also any people who are puffed up with the vice of pride, dirtied with the corruption of luxury or haunted with the disease of avarice . . . Crocodiles lie by night in the water, by day on land, because hypocrites, however luxuriously they live by night delight to be said to live holily and justly by day." White's Book of Beasts, p. 51. By this description the crocodile is clearly the antithesis of the knightly ideal. Elsewhere he is characterized by his cruelty followed by remorse: Philippe de Thaün, Le bestiaire, pp. 26-27. It is more helpful to consider the crocodile the opposite of valiance, with both figures stalemated in an unresolved struggle which is of no further concern to either Erec or Arthur. The leopard has been discussed in connection with the theme of sleep in note 60.

[92] Macrobius, Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, translated by William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), Bk. II, ch. 3, pp. 195-7. Stefan Hofer is of the opinion that Chrétien knew his Macrobius but that he used the material freely. "Kristian und Macrobius," ZRP 48 (1928): 130-31.

[93] Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers, a translation by Joseph B. Pike (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press and London: Oxford University Press, 1938), Bk. II, ch. 19, p. 97. See also Lewis, The Discarded Image, p. 103.

[94] Pike's translation of the Policraticus, Bk. II, ch. 18, p. 92.

[95] Macrobius, Commentary, Bk. II, ch. 8, pp. 121-22.

[96] Macrobius would not have considered Arthurian society to be an ideal commonwealth: "What could be

more accurate, what more guarded than his definition of the term commonwealths as *the associations and federations of men bound together by principles of justice*? Indeed there have been bands of slaves and of gladiators that might be called associations and federations, but they were not bound together by principles of right. The name "just" can be applied only to that group of men which in its entirety consents in obedience to the laws." (Bk. II, ch. 8, p. 124)

[97] "The more brilliant the success, the denser the clouds that gather around their dazzled eyes . . .", Pike's translation of the *Policraticus*, Bk. I, ch. 1, p. 11. This passage leads up to a diatribe against hunting.

[98] E. R. Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern: A. Francke, 1948), pp. 95-97, discusses among *topoi* of the *exordium*, "der Besitz von Wissen verpflichtet zur Mitteilung", and cites *Erec* (6-8) as an example.

[99] Haidu, *Aesthetic Distance*, p. 22.

[100] Chrétien must have been aware of the desire of English monarchs to trace their ancestry back through Arthur to Brutus, great-grandson of Aeneas, since these pretentions inspired Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* and Wace's *Brut*. It can be deduced from Chrétien's treatment of the Arthurian legend in all his romances that he would have had no use for the aspirations of Henry II in this regard. It is not necessary to postulate political satire directed specifically against Henry. Chrétien may have used the Plantagenet guest list simply to evoke a contemporary scene in which illusion is shown to be operative beyond the fictional world, within a society comparable to the one in which the reader lived. It might, however, be rewarding to investigate the possibility of political satire in *Erec*, *Cligès* and *Yvain*.

CHAPTER III

YVAIN

A General View

In the first part of Yvain, the hero undertakes an adventure described to him by his cousin, Calogrenant. Where Calogrenant failed by the standards of the court, Yvain succeeds. He kills Laudine's husband and marries the widow, all within three days, thus acquiring enor (2285-86) in the eyes of the court. This enor is the equivalent of a successful completion of the adventure; learning the details of the adventure in no way diminishes the court's appreciation of Yvain (2293-2308).[1] They expect him to return with them, once the festivities are over. Gauvain not only persuades him to leave but binds Yvain to the vain pursuit of honour in tournaments so that the latter overstays the year's absence granted by Laudine (2669-82). Her love turns to hate, she forbids him to return to her, and Yvain in his grief goes mad.

The subsequent adventures fall into two main groups. The first group depicts Yvain's progress as he recovers from his madness and becomes a rational socially-oriented individual, obtaining a new identity as the Chevalier au Lion. The second group represents his relapse into the anonymity of the Arthurian world. The epilogue portrays his return to the fountain where he becomes reunited with his wife. Throughout the romance the theme of Amors, announced in the prologue, and that of amors, in the sense of kindness and compassion or of caritas, are interwoven; the former pertains to the world of illusion, the second is depicted as the foundation of the outside world but endangered by idealizations of courtly love and chivalry.

During his madness Yvain establishes a working relationship with a hermit. Neither one trusts the other but it is a cooperative and mutually beneficial way of life, however limited. This tentative rapport represents society and caritas in its most elementary form. Awakened from the sleep of madness Yvain is clothed and trained into his calling as a knight. He performs for society, in this case for the Dame de Norison. He protects a woman whose lands are invaded by an army led by a neighbouring count. Yvain becomes himself the leader of her army, in recognition of the service she did for him. This episode reflects many facets of other episodes. The lady's kindness to Yvain was not disinterested. Her attempts to keep him as a permanent defender by promises of love, marriage, or money reflect Laudine's relationship with him. The difference between the two women is that whereas the lady's danger is real, Laudine's will be shown to be illusory. There is also a comment on those like Gauvain's brother-in-law or Arthur who use the knight-errant alone in single combat to perform what would be better accomplished by organized militia or a court of law. The knight-errant is cast as the Lone Ranger of the middle ages, the arm of law and order in an essentially lawless society. The Dame de Norison sees him in the role of leader of the army as insurance against further attack, but not as a perpetual single defender of her lands.

Upon leaving her, Yvain saves a lion from a serpent because the lion represents good and the serpent evil. Yvain acquires the power to choose rationally between right and wrong and to initiate charitable action (3348-59). He stands in contrast to Gauvain who never examines the moral validity of the cause. The lion corresponds to a sense of purpose or a social conscience which informs the next two adventures. It becomes Yvain's rational identity which distinguishes him from all other knights. Yvain becomes the Chevalier au Lion.

Some ancillary wisdom is taught in this episode. Yvain recognizes the defeat of the serpent as essential but is prepared for the possible necessity of defending himself against the lion (3365-71). On a symbolic level, Yvain will be continually fighting his lion as he attempts to conform to Arthurian knighthood. On a moral level, it is suggested that while evil, like the giant and Lunete's accusers, can be easily identified, the good which one defends may be much more complex and difficult to assess.

The accidental return to the fountain restores Yvain's memory and thus restores his irrational allegiance to Gauvain and the court. Immediately he faces a crisis: Lunete is to be burned at the stake for having arranged his marriage with Laudine. Yvain is convinced that he owes his life to her and that she is innocent. The event is taking place on his own land over which he is supposedly sire (2472-77). He has a direct obligation to step in immediately. However, the process of erosion of rational process has begun.

He accepts conditions laid down by the seneschal who is acting with the consent of Laudine. They demand a judicial duel of one knight against three the following day at noon. Instead of taking command, Yvain offers his services as if he were any knight-errant, insisting that his identity not be revealed (3715-25). The Chevalier au Lion has already begun to deteriorate into the functional but mindless Yvain, forever trying to be Gauvain, ultimately joining combat with Gauvain himself in perfect equality, both of them anonymous.

Having sought and found lodging for the night, he discovers that the lord of the castle, Gauvain's brother-in-law, is to lose his children to the giant Harpin some time before noon if a knight cannot be found to fight the giant in single combat. Yvain's concern for these people springs originally from general compassion (3840-44). From the time he knows of the relationship with Gauvain, his dilemma is poised between his duty to Lunete and his allegiance to Gauvain. He knows Lunete's life takes priority, but the thought of what will happen to Gauvain's family holds him paralysed until the giant arrives.

After defeating the giant he returns just in time to save Lunete. He fights anonymously, his lion put aside, still refusing to reveal his personal involvement in the trial. Nevertheless, the lion helps him to win, entering the fray when he perceives his master in danger of losing. Yvain leaves, still unknown to Laudine, bearing the wounded lion on his shield.

Yvain at that moment turns his back upon his personal concerns. Simultaneously, his renown as the Chevalier au Lion has spread to Arthur's court. Upon hearing of him, the disinherited sister seeks him as champion to undertake her cause at Arthur's court. This is his function in its most generically conventional sense. The knight should be the defender of the oppressed in general and of womanhood in particular. It is right that she should be defended. It is not right, as she well realizes (5937-53, 5962-69), that a minor legal dispute should be settled by judicial duel when Arthur could make the decision himself. She later points out that the man who is staking his life for her does not know her, nor she him (5977-84). The knight is thus placed in the unenviable position of making a legal or moral decision without knowledge of the people or of the situation and of defending that decision with his life. Yvain is moving back physically as well as psychologically to an irrational system, the rules of which he accepts.

He undertakes Pesme Aventure for no reason whatsoever, endangering his life and the sister's cause. This is the perfect Arthurian adventure: an illusion created totally by words in which he believes. Here the "rules of the game" have no rapport at all with the facts known to the reader but he accepts them as a proper basis for his own irrational behaviour simply because they are the rules of adventure. This adventure prepares the way for the final judicial duel in which combat proves equally unnecessary and futile. He fights Gauvain until recognition ends the duel. He declares himself vanquished because of the love he bears Gauvain. The cause he fought for is forgotten. Arthur is forced to assume his royal responsibility. By cutting a few Gordian knots he manages to delude everybody by his show of kingship. Yvain has come full cycle, becoming the same knight who first set out to discover the fountain. This time he is not alone. His faithful lion is with him once more. Thanks to the intervention of

Lunete, they all live happily ever after (*la pes sanz fin*, 6801)

> Del *Chevalier au lyeon* fine
> Crestiens son romans ensi;
> n'onques plus conter n'en oï
> ni ja plus n'en orroiz conter
> s'an n'i vialt mançonge ajoster (6804-8)

This ending would seem to preclude any suggestion that Yvain returned to Arthur's court. Nor is there any indication in the final scene that there will be any further need or duty to defend the fountain. The *Amors* which dominated his relationship with Arthur's court and with his wife has been vanquished. Yvain is finally restored to a more durable sanity.[2]

The Figure of Gauvain

Gauvain is a much more active figure in *Yvain* than in *Erec*. Upon him depends the illusion of the greatness of Arthur's court. By the general consent of all in the romance he is the one knight who will defend the oppressed against injustice, protect women, love gallantly and fight bravely. The illusion is at no point sustained by fact. The only good deed Gauvain attempts is the rescue of Guinevere. There may be some doubt in the mind of the reader whether the rescue of Guinevere is either necessary or desirable but, in any event, Gauvain fails.[3]

He is absent when Lunete and his family need him, nor is there anyone at court to take his place. He pledges service and love lightly. He fights bravely but on the wrong side. He is totally ineffectual. Yet he remains the "sun" of chivalry and the best knight in the world (2402-10, and 4785).

When Lunete and Gauvain first meet, Gauvain promises himself as Lunete's champion should need arise, with the admonition that she should never exchange him for another knight (2435-41). He calls himself "son conpaignon et son ami" (2424). When Yvain finds Lunete imprisoned in the chapel he asks why Gauvain does not defend her:

> -Et mes sire Gauvain, chaeles,
> li frans, li dolz, ou ert il donques?
> A s'aïe ne failli onques
> dameisele desconseilliee. (3692-95)

At no point in the romance is the naïve faith which Yvain expresses here ever justified. Lunete explains that had she been able to find Gauvain nothing would have been refused her (3696-99). This is a declaration of faith similar to Yvain's but it is followed by a condemnation of the king:

> mes la reïne en a menee
> uns chevaliers, ce me dit an,
> don li rois fist que fors del san,
> quant aprés li l'en envoia;
> et Kex, ce cuit, la convoia
> jusqu'au chevalier qui l'en mainne;
> s'an est or entrez an grant painne

> mes sire Gauvains qui la quiert.
> Ja mes nul jor a sejor n'iert
> jusque tant qu'il l'avra trovee. (3700-9)

The irony of the final lines is apparent only if the reader knows that Gauvain's painne culminates in near drowning and that he never strikes a blow in the defense of Guinevere.

Yvain expresses wonderment ("mervoil", 3899) to the victim of the giant Harpin that he has not sought help at Arthur's court where all knights are always ready to test their strength against any opponent (3902-5). The answer speaks ill of Arthur and Kay, the former regarded as the dupe of the latter:

> Ne por quant ja ne l'en eüst
> menee, por rien qu'il peüst,
> ne fust Kex qui anbricona
> le roi, tant que il li bailla
> la reïne, et mist en sa garde.
> Cil fu fos et cele musarde
> qui an son conduit se fïa, . . . (3915-21)

Guinevere herself is criticized, and it is suggested that had Gauvain been in charge she would never have been abducted. In fact, Gauvain did not volunteer for the task which Kay undertook, but Gauvain himself is never criticized.

The Harpin adventure serves primarily to portray Yvain's adherence to the Gauvain myth. It is also a prefiguration of Pesme Aventure to which Yvain is also drawn by the need for a night's lodging and which is also an obstacle to a prior commitment. Both adventures are creations to suit the knight-errant myth, the generic assumption that a single knight can win against overwhelming odds while those who are directly and personally involved do nothing to ameliorate the situation. The lord's castle is strong and secure from attack (3766-75). Other methods of destroying the enemy might at some point have been found, but the lord of the castle is made vulnerable by his belief in Gauvain and in the myth of the knight as saviour. There are two main differences between the two adventures. Here some sort of combat is vital whereas at Pesme Aventure such is not the case. Here Yvain replaces Gauvain after much anguished soul-searching concerning his prior obligation to Lunete, whereas in the later adventure there is no inner debate and his compunctions are easily over-ruled. In both cases the knight's curiosity involves him in the adventure but in the first instance curiosity is understandable although Yvain never realizes that he has been lured into asking questions and responding to the challenge as a good knight should. Gauvain's brother-in-law is counting on stock reactions. The trap is sprung as Yvain consents to undertake the defense if there is time (3934-45), a statement which the father conveys to his wife and daughter as a clear-cut commitment. Yvain still holds fast to his prior statement, but his "Gauvain-fixation" rapidly replaces his feelings for the people themselves (3972-81, 4033-39). In the morning when he says he must leave, the daughter pleads with him to remain in the name of Mary, the angels and God, and because of her uncle, Gauvain. Yvain's reaction to her plea inverts the order putting Gauvain ahead of both Mary and God (4064-69). His angoisse is expressed in terms of his pledge to Lunete, the possibility of his own death or insanity if he fails to arrive in time, and

> et d'autre part, autre destrece
> le retient, la granz gentillece
> mon seignor Gauvain son ami,
> que par po ne li part par mi
> li cuers, quant demorer ne puet.
> Ne por quant encor ne se muet,
> einçois demore et si atant
> tant que li jaianz vient batant . . . (4077-84)

It is the thought of Gauvain, not of Gauvain's family, which holds him paralysed. The adventure terminated, he requests that Gauvain be told about his "bonté" (4274). The Chevalier au Lion is concerned about his renown at Arthur's court.

One of the interesting facets of Yvain's blind faith in his friend is that he holds no grudge against the man responsible for breaking up his marriage, the results of which were his own insanity and the charges of treason brought against Lunete. It may be recalled that when Arthur wishes to leave Laudine's castle with his court, all want Yvain to return with them as if he were free to go now that the adventure is successfully completed. Gauvain convinces Yvain that he and Laudine will cease to love each other if he does not prove himself worthy of her by knightly deeds (2486-2500). The knight-lady relationship is thus portrayed as the love-prowess relationship found in Erec. Gauvain does not envisage the marriage as creating obligations which might keep Yvain at home (2510-11). He does not know, nor does Yvain tell him, that the condition upon which he became Laudine's husband was that he would defend the fountain, a demand which requires the knight-lady relationship to be acted out at Landuc and not elsewhere. Yvain knows that Laudine will not approve of Gauvain's invitation to go tourneying. He resorts to the "rash boon", requesting of Laudine that she grant "une chose . . . por vostre enor et por la moie" (2554-55). He thus gives every indication of awareness that while honour is essential to them both, Laudine's concept of honour is not compatible with his own. His flattery and his claims of sadness at being separated from her are too unctious to be sincere. He resents her setting a one-year time limit, arguing that he may be unavoidably detained (2581-96). Laudine attempts to hold him with a magic ring which will prevent captivity or loss of blood, and replace armour itself as long as Yvain is a loyal and true amanz, remembering his amie at all times (2597-2615). Yvain balks at the protection, quickly dispelling the "magic" by forgetting her (2663-64). Gauvain's friendship is a more potent magic. His protection of Yvain's honour creates a bond of love stronger than that which binds Yvain to Laudine (2669-82). By the time a year and three months more have passed, Yvain has reached the summit of pride and renown when a lady comes to take back Laudine's ring. She accuses Yvain of the metaphorical murder of his lady because he rode away with her heart and neglected to return it to her. Laudine's love has turned to hate. In the face of this disaster Yvain's self-love turns to self-hate. He succumbs to madness. The return of his memory instills in him a feeling of personal guilt in the simplest possible terms: he overstayed his contracted time. He cannot blame Gauvain and the court unless he rejects all his illusions about his own and the court's behaviour. Since he cannot reject the illusion, he moves ever deeper into it, his physical equality with Gauvain in the final duel reflecting equality in indifference to any morality beyond that vested in chivalric and courtly ritual.

The final judicial duel portrays Gauvain as brave and courteous. The fact that he continues to defend the sister in the wrong after being apprised of the fact in no way detracts from his mythical excellence.[4]

The Lion and the "Right Road"

Frappier regards the lion as a "signe de la perfection chevaleresque"[5], its sources to be found in the Androcles tradition rather than in that of the Bestiairies.[6] Harris adheres to the latter tradition finding in the lion a symbol of the Redeemer.[7] Haidu's very thoughtful study of Chrétien's lion[8] points out various sources and symbolisms each of which is sustained by the text. Theological tradition entitles one to consider the lion either as a symbol of Christ or as that of the Anti-Christ. Classical tradition provides us with a grateful and faithful lion in Androcles and a ferocious beast in Piramus and Thisbe. Chrétien's lion may be dog-like and gentle or remarkably blood-thirsty and lion-like. One moment he is associated with divine intervention, the next, with slaughter. There is no one symbolic system used as a vehicle for the moral:

> Car Chrétien, après son renvoi à cette tradition iconographique et mystique, s'amuse de son lion et nous amuse avec son lion. L'animal, un moment entouré d'autres signes iconographiques (le serpent, son geste d'humilité, etc.), un moment rehaussé comme véhicule d'allégorie christologique, redevient, dans l'épisode suivant, non pas un simple et banal lion, il est vrai, mais un pur lion littéraire, féroce et tendre, symbole de fidélité et de férocité, de sentimentalité, d'ironie, et de farce, symbole de tout sauf du Christ ou de n'importe quelle valeur religieuse prise avec gravité.[9]

It is clear that Chrétien has quite deliberately made the lion incapable of sustaining Christian allegory. The question remains unanswered why Chrétien went to the trouble of invoking a tradition which he then obscured. The lion is sometimes ludicrously humanized. In my opinion, the answer is that Chrétien wished not so much to deprive the lion of his divinity, but metaphorically to endow Yvain with the human dignity of a conscience, and with reason and compassion which he did not manifest prior to the decision which led to saving the lion's life. Nowhere in Chrétien does a knight undergo the moral crisis which Yvain endured prior to the Harpin combat. At this moment, when his devotion to Gauvain is at its greatest, he is the least like Gauvain for whom moral concerns are not pertinent. From this point on he becomes increasingly like Gauvain as the lion is put aside with ever greater alacrity. The lion may be said to represent the rational functioning of amors within Yvain as long as the two work together.

It is amusing to see the lion bowing to Yvain, "piez joinz" (3392), expressing his gratitude to the man who saved his life. But it is more amusing to consider this as an echo of Yvain's own gesture of feudal homage at the feet of the woman whom he has just widowed (1974-76). For Yvain this is an empty gesture of Amors. The lion's gesture expresses amors and the promise of unswerving, devoted service. The lion is Yvain's identity not only in name but also insofar as he represents Yvain's identification with any external reality that coincides with his own. He is an inner counterbalance to Gauvain or to unrealistic ideals of love and chivalry. When Yvain and his lion are one, Yvain accepts *amors* as an active principle in his life. Love and compassion become a basis for effective personal action. As the rational is superceded by the illusory, Yvain loses his sense of personal identity, finally becoming anonymous. The lion is not present for the final judicial duel, when Yvain declares himself vanquished not by Gauvain but by the love he bears his idol. This love is *Amors* as is shown dramatically in the long passage on Love and Hate immediately prior to the combat. It has nothing to do with *caritas*, being rather the self-love which arises from blind identification with the object of one's love.

As long as the effect of the lion is strong, Yvain follows the "right road". Calogrenant, too, followed the "right road" (178-9, 203-6, 376-79) to an adventure which taught him the folly of knight-errantry and awakened him to social realities. For Yvain the "right road" does not appear until, convinced of Lunete's innocence, he undertakes to be her champion and leaves her to take lodging for the night. The "droite voie" (3778) leads to Gauvain's family and to the defeat of a figure which may be considered to represent brutality and lawlessness. The lion fights by his side. He returns to Lunete by the "right road" (4307-11). Conforming unquestioningly to the rules of the judicial duel, he puts his identity aside just as the lion is temporarily put aside (4453-68).

The lion is clearly associated with Yvain's conviction that Lunete is unjustly accused. First Yvain declares his belief in what Lunete has told him (4426-34). He concludes:

> "si la desfandrai, se je puis,
> que son droit en m'afe truis." (4435-36)

He continues with a statement of the theory behind the judicial duel, that God defends the right:

> "Et qui le voir dire an voldroit
> Dex se retint de vers le droit,
> et Dex et droiz a un s'an tienent;
> et quant il de vers moi s'an vienent
> dons ai ge meillor conpaingnie
> que tu n'as, et meillor afe." (4437-42)

The word "conpaingnie" refers to the two men who will fight alongside the seneschal, whereas Yvain will have God and the right as his companions. This remark causes the seneschal to consider the presence of the lion whom he considers a somewhat more immediate source of help to his adversary (4443-46). They claim that unless he is put aside, Lunete will be burned without a combat. Yvain accepts. As he becomes hard pressed in battle, the women who love Lunete pray for him:

> De priere aïde li font
> les dames, qu'autres bastons n'ont.
> Et li lÿons li fet aïe . . . (4513-15)

In this passage Yvain's faith in God and the right and the seneschal's view of the lion are merged, and both may be considered right in that the lion is not an abstract embodiment of divine justice. He is much too vicious a fighter. In putting the lion aside Yvain attempted to act simply as a champion as if he had no personal involvement in the matter. He has fought honourably and anonymously according to the unfair rules laid down by the enemy. He is about to lose. He accepts the lion's intervention and in so doing rejects the knightly code of fair-play which has proven useless against those who do not observe the code. Joined with his lion he is once more a whole person, having replaced the useless code with common sense. The intervention of the lion corresponds to divine intervention only in the sense that Yvain's faculty of reason has temporarily returned to him. If he is defeated he will not save Lunete and moreover he will die with her. He is also now fighting for himself, which is as it should be, since Lunete was not accused of treason for arranging the marriage but because Yvain failed to return. The fault is his. Once the combat is over, he retreats once more into anonymity, refusing to disclose his identity except as the Chevalier au Lion "que ne sui gueres renomez" (4614). At the end of the combat, the lion has become no more than a name. It is appropriate that Yvain leaves bearing the badly wounded beast on his shield, turning his back upon Laudine a second time and accepting her rule over their relationship. For him, the right road is now lost.

The theme of the right road reappears when a friend of the disinherited sister tries to find the Chevalier au Lion. Following the sound of a horn in the dark she finds a path leading right to it (droit, 4859). Travelling "droit a la voiz" (4863) she reaches a cross to the right of the path (a destre, 4865). She has arrived at the castle belonging to Gauvain's relatives where she explains her quest for the one in whom she can trust: "que an lui molt fier me puis" (4898). The father answers her, "Beneoit soient li santier par ou il vint a mon ostel" (4902-3) and puts her on the path (*el droit chemin*, 4929) toward the fountain under the pine tree. The girl follows *la voie droite* (4932) which leads to Lunete who accompanies her to the *droit chemin* (4980) taken by Yvain upon his departure. At the house where Yvain and the lion recovered from their wounds, the girl discovers that they have just left. She hastens forward until she catches up with them. There is no further mention of the right road. She has accomplished her quest but the knight she has found is no longer the Chevalier au Lion. He is losing contact with his lion, or with full consciousness of himself as part of an external reality. The next adventure is gratuitous and the final duel a farce. At *Pesme Aventure* the lion is locked away by Yvain himself (5563), and for the duel it is left behind altogether. The cause which Yvain undertook to defend "par amors" (5981), or so the disinherited sister thought, is forgotten, replaced by the *Amors* which binds him to Gauvain. *Amors* again prompts him to return to the fountain but he is accompanied by his lion. Through the efforts of Lunete there is finally established "boene pes et boene amor" (6741).

The Figure of Arthur

The elder sister upon arriving at court immediately obtains the services of Gauvain, "the best knight in the world" (4785). The younger sister arrives too late. Gauvain informs her that he is otherwise occupied. She turns then to Arthur, lamenting that there is no help or advice to be obtained at his court (4768-79). Again the reader is presented with the paradox that whatever doubts people may have about Arthur and the other knights of the court, Gauvain's charisma remains intact. He is "the court", for no other knight except Kay offers to fight. Arthur consistently refuses to make legal decisions because of his naïve belief that the judicial duel, like all combat, results in the victory of "the right" (5919-24). Gauvain, too, claims to believe in this philosophy. There is no indication why he demanded of the lady that his name not be revealed or why he disappeared until the day of the combat, arriving in arms by which he could not be recognized (5866-77). It must be assumed that whether he was aware that his was the wrong cause, his anonymity reflects his total detachment from the moral issue, a denial that reason should prove superior to the sword. Yvain, too, avoids recognition, taking lodging where they will not be known, for they do not wish to be recognized (5856-61). Both knights have lost personal involvement with the causes they are defending. They are not morally responsible invividuals, they are anonymous and mindless fighters. They have become tools, not of God, but of man.

Arthur is manipulated by the elder sister. She rejects the younger sister's request for a decision, demanding a duel immediately. Arthur objects, not to the duel, but to the urgency. He grants the younger sister the minimum fourteen days. In accepting his decision, the younger sister comes very close to criticizing Arthur's concept of justice (4799-4805). The narrator considers the elder sister to be in the wrong (_qui tort a_, 5878). Arthur knows her to be in the wrong (_qui molt bien savoit que la pucele tort avoit vers sa soror_, 5903-4), but invokes the abstract concept of justice only to oblige her to wait until the appointed time. For Arthur, justice is simply a matter of adhering to the rules of judicial combat.[10]

The younger sister upon arriving declares herself ready as required but makes two pleas that agreement be reached without combat (5945-53, 5962-69). The first time she argues that the affair is of no personal concern to the knight who has left behind his own responsibilities for hers. The second time she grieves that two good men should fight over such a small dispute, stressing that although to her the decision is of great importance, to others it is a minor affair. This is the voice of reason, arguing against the system of trial by ordeal, against the belief that combat alone can establish right. It is by extension an attack on Gauvain's indifference to his obligations and on Arthur's impotence as a king. Her appeal fails. She calls on God to protect her knight who undertook to help her "par amors et par frainchise" (5981).

As the equality of the knights becomes manifest, all beg Arthur to give part of the elder sister's inheritance to the younger and separate the knights (6167-80):

> Mes l'ainz nee estoit si anrievre
> que nes la reïne Ganievre
> et cil qui savoient lor lois
> et li chevalier et li rois
> devers la mains nee se tienent; (6167-71)

Even those who know law would not oppose a sharing of the estate, giving a third or a quarter to the younger (6175). Whoever these people are, they have at no time been consulted by Arthur, the sisters or the knights. They suggest that Arthur is free to separate the combatants and decide the matter himself. But Arthur refuses on the grounds that the elder sister (male criature, 6184) will not permit it, thus putting Yvain and Gauvain in the position of "buying renown with martyrdom" (6192). The two knights hear this exchange (6185-87). Gauvain knows at this point that he is defending the wrong side, if he did not know before, but he does not stop fighting until the scene of mutual recognition, when he says that he would have lost because he was defending the unjust cause. He is acting out a ritual which precludes personal decision.

The king is somewhat surprised by the sudden love which blossoms between the antagonists (6315-19). It must be explained to him by Gauvain:

> Des que or estes aresté
> por l'oïr et por le savoir,
> bien iert qui vos an dira voir. (6324-26)

Gauvain gives Arthur credit for stopping long enough to hear and understand, but the explanation has nothing to do with the legal or moral aspects of the duel, only with the fact that each knight has discovered the other to be his friend. They then try to outdo each other in claiming to have been vanquished by the other: "-Mes ge.-Mes ge, fet cil et cil" (6351). The decision is forced upon Arthur who satisfies himself that legal procedure is being followed by tricking the elder sister into an admission of guilt:[11]

> "Ou est, fet il, la dameisele
> qui sa seror a fors botée
> de sa terre, et deseritée
> par force et par male merci? (6378-81)

When the girl steps forward, Arthur claims he knew all along that the fault was hers. She then accuses Arthur of behaviour ill-becoming a king:

> Vos estes rois, si me devez
> de tort garder et de mesprendre. (6394-95)

Like a small boy scolded by his mother, Arthur protests that he only wanted to give the younger sister her rights (6396-98).

From the beginning of the legal dispute Arthur has been controlled by the wrong-doer because of his own belief in judicial combat. She does not share this belief with him, her own faith being placed in the strength of her champion, and not at all in the will of God. The system she herself invoked now turns against her, for Arthur now takes the place of God by deciding not the outcome of the trial but that of the duel. He threatens that if she does not obey he will declare Gauvain defeated. This can be considered either an idle threat or a lie since he would never have done so:

> Il ne le deïst a nul fuer
> mes il le dit por essaier
> s'il la porroit tant esmaier
> qu'ele randist a sa seror
> son heritage, par peor,
> qu'il s'est aparceüz molt bien
> que ele ne l'en randist rien
> por quan que dire li seüst
> se force ou crieme n'i eüst. (6414-22)

The king, who previously announced that he would settle the matter in such a way that he would be forever praised (6372), has come to a full realization of his own impotence as a king. He has, however, made the decision he could have made when the matter was first presented to him. The bloodshed has been for nothing. Arthur's court is a mockery of kingship, knighthood and justice.[12] Its greatness is a fiction.

While Arthur was himself the focal point of the illusion in _Erec_, he is here replaced by Gauvain. In _Erec_, Gauvain is never put to the test and is therefore never found wanting. In _Yvain_ the narrative presents a continuous contrast between the myth and the reality of the knight who, it is true is never defeated, but who never wins. The court is not devoid of compassion. As in Erec, the general atmosphere is one of well-intentioned foolishness and spontaneous affection. It is innocuous, as all fiction is innocuous, unless it is taken seriously. Pesme Aventure and Landuc are examples of the dangers of being unable to distinguish fact from fiction.

Landuc

Those who believe that Arthur's court is the centre of chivalry, justice and love, or who believe in the myth of Gauvain stand in very real danger of losing their lives or their lands. At the court itself the danger is potential only. Deceit and wrongs done are glossed over because ultimately no one is hurt. Branching away from this centre is the illusion of Pesme Aventure which has no pretentions as far as justice is concerned; its brutality is manifest. It is a creation of, and a danger to, those who believe in fictional adventures involving love and chivalry. Like the giant episode in Erec it is total illusion. There is little rapport between the actual situation and Yvain's interpretation of it. The other branch of the Arthurian illusion, Laudine's fountain, is like the enchanted garden in Erec. It is a sur-reality created out of the illusion of "the lady". There are pretentions to justice (the trial of Yvain, imagined and carried out, the trial of Lunete) which mask brutality and cowardice. Society at Landuc is organized so that the protagonists may live out roles by which the myth of the fountain may be perpetuated. Deceit is a way of life to ward off unpleasant realities.

To the knight-errant the myth of the fountain is that it presents simply a "merveille" in the form of a tempest. The allure of the fountain and the result of the pouring of water on the stone vary with the expectations of the person making the experiment. For the vilain the bowl is iron, the stone is just stone, but the tree is beautiful and the tempest awe-inspiring. The vilain warns Calogrenant that he will be luckier than any knight before him if he escapes "sanz grant enui et sanz pesance" (405), but he makes no specific mention of combat. Calogrenant finds the bowl made of gold, the stone made of rubies and emeralds, the storm terrifying and the peace which follows an idyllic experience. The arrival of the knight is a rude awakening. Calogrenant is not really out looking for a fight. He has been prepared for the "merveille" which has been described to him. Further he is not a model knight, for he has proven himself with the vavasour and his daughter and with the vilain to be a gentle man, even timid.[13] Because he intended no harm, no harm is done to him. For this reason the encounter is essentially a reproach, a reminder that adventure is simply a matter of trespassing on other people's land and disrupting their lives (491-516). Calogrenant sees the damage done to the forest (448) and feels that the knight's complaint is justified. He started off on his adventure "armez de totes armeüres si come chevaliers doit estre" (176-7). Now lacking a horse, he must abandon his arms so that he may walk back to his host of the previous night. The disarming is practical but represents his disenchantment with chivalry. The difference between himself and other knights who tried this adventure is remarked upon by the vavasour who treats him just as honourably as before, congratulating him on being the only knight to have avoided death or imprisonment. Calogrenant returns to the court without any further attempt so far as the reader knows at putting the ideals of the court into action, with the one exception that he alone rises in the presence of the queen.

When Calogrenant tells his story he is insistent that it be understood by the heart and not just heard by the ears; his story is not songe, fable, or mançonge: it is truth (150-72). He concludes the story of his folly by indicating that there is also folly in telling the story. He is perfectly right. Yvain is deaf to the implications. In his view the folly or the shame is that of defeat. The affront to his cousin must be avenged. This motive becomes secondary when, insulted by Kay, Yvain wishes to prove himself to his tormentor by winning the battle of the fountain.

Yvain's experience with the vavasour and the vilain is enhanced (777-99). The scenes succeed each other like an accelerated film sequence. Once arrived at the fountain, his eagerness to fight is such that the "merveille" itself is of little interest to him:

> Puis erra jusqu'a la fontainne.
> si vit quan qu'il voloit veoir.
> Sanz arester et sanz seoir
> verssa sor le perron de plain
> de l'eve le bacin tot plain.
> Et maintenant vanta et plut,
> et fist tel tans con faire dut. (800-806)

The storm itself is quite perfunctory. Arthur in his turn will apparently bypass the vilain and the vavasour to come directly to the fountain:

> Et li rois por veoir la pluie
> versa de l'eve plain bacin
> sor le perron, desoz le pin;
> et plut tantost molt fondelmant. (2220-23)

Arthur came to see rain and he saw rain. At the end of the romance, Yvain and his lion return:

> Puis errerent tant que il virent
> la fontainne; et plovoir i firent.
> Ne cuidiez pas que je vos mante
> que si fu fiere la tormante
> que nus n'an conteroit le disme,
> qu'il sanbloit que jusqu'an abisme
> deüst fondre la forez tote! (6523-29)

Yvain and the lion together just make it rain, not even "fondelmant".[14] The storm which the narrator describes is made suspect by his protest that he is not lying. Calogrenant also assured the reader that he was not lying about the gold and precious stones which had previously been iron and stone (430-31). This device in *Yvain* is rare and, unlike its use in *Ere*[illegible] does not cast aspersions on the veracity of the speaker, who genuinely believes that he is telling the truth. Further, "nul n'an conteroit" creates detachment, as opposed to the more conventional "I couldn't begin to tell you"; the narrator seems to be relying on hearsay. The storm exists in Yvain's intention to create such a storm (6510-16) and in the belief of the people in the castle that the storm exists and that it causes devastation. There is no indication that Yvain on his first visit, or Arthur, so greatly feared yet so warmly welcomed right after the rain, created any devastation whatsoever. The "merveille" exists only for those who believe in it, and it takes whatever form they expect. Around this belief the people of the castle maintain the custom that there must be a fountain defender or perhaps even a succession of fountain defenders, but not to prevent devastation. The sole purpose of the defense is retaliation, and the sole purpose of the fountain is to prove Laudine's domination over the knight who is prepared to die for her. In this sense the fountain is indeed perilleuse (810) for those who fully believe that adventure must involve combat.

Calogrenant is a fairly civilized man and he receives a fairly civilized response from the fountain defender. Yvain is a barbarian. The narrator's rhetoric and the inhabitants of the castle attempt to give to his actions and his motives refinements which they do not have. The defender knows his opponent's disposition. There are no preliminary words; there is no challenge on either side. Yvain mortally wounds the unknown knight who flees back into his castle pursued so closely that his moans of distress are heard by the man whose prime interest is in proof of his victory:

> Si con girfauz grue randone,
> qui de loing muet et tant l'aproche
> qu'il la cuide panre et n'i toche,
> ensi cil fuit, et cil le chace

si pres qu'a po qu'il ne l'anbrace,
et si ne le par puet ataindre,
et s'est si pres que il l'ot plaindre
de la destrece que il sant;
mes toz jorz a foïr entant,
et cil de chacier s'esvertue,
qu'il crient sa poinne avoir perdue
se mort ou vif ne le retient,
que des ranpones li sovient
que mes sire Kex li ot dites.
N'est pas de la promesse quites
que son cosin avoit promise,
ne creëz n'iert an nule guise
s'anseignes veraies n'an porte. (882-99)

The descriptive imagery of hunter and hunted in a natural setting has undertones of savagery. Such savagery cannot compare with that of Yvain. In the sky, the crane may yet escape. Down below, no poetry can transform the possibility of "embrace" into a gesture of compassion. The inescapable fact in the scenes which follow is that a man is dead and that his murderer and those who conspired to place his life in jeopardy are indifferent to his death. He is soon forgotten. The grief which is displayed is a parody of mourning.

The passage describing with brutal realism the flight of the dying man is succeeded by a passage or bridge from reality to illusion. The narrator turns his attention to the falling sword-like door. It is mechanical, not magic, and it is deadly. It is no doubt responsible for the deaths or imprisonments of the knights who have preceded Calogrenant and Yvain

(576). It is cited as having caused the death of many (1099-1100). As the wounded knight passes through a second portcullis, Yvain's horse is sliced in two by the first, leaving him in a well furnished and elegantly tapestried room, the ceiling of which is studded with gold nails. Yvain has crossed the threshold into a trap designed either to protect the defender and kill his assailant or to obtain a successor. A play is then enacted entirely for Yvain's benefit.

Lunete enters with the deliberate intention of inspiring fear in Yvain (977). She tells him that he is to be hunted down and killed in this room because of the great grief all feel for their dead master (978-992). Yvain does not confess fear, claiming to place his faith in God (994-95). The author's irony in this pious remark is apparent when one considers that the romance consistently invokes God and the right in a good cause, while here the speaker is a murderer. Lunete then promises to save his life in return for a kindness he once did for her, repeatedly assuring him of her good faith (1001-15, 1082-5). The reader has no way of knowing whether the incident has remained in Yvain's mind, but it is certain that Lunete knows Yvain's name and lineage (1016-1019).

"Or soiez seürs et certains
que ja, se croire me volez,
n'i seroiz pris ne afolez:
et cest mien anelet prendroiz
et, s'il vos plest, sel me rendroiz
quant je vos avrai delivré." (1020-25)

The key words are "if you wish to believe me". She gives him a ring which will hide him just as bark hides the wood of a tree (1026-29, 1036-7). No one remarks on the fact that a tree, however transformed by its covering of bark, is still visible. Yvain believes that he cannot be seen. Lunete's words are important. She does not say that Yvain will be invisible. She says that the searchers will be blind (1076 and 1077) or unable to see (1034-5). The narrator describes them groping "as if blind" (1142) and repeats Lunete's phrase that they have no eyes to see Yvain (1106-08). The searchers and Laudine claim themselves caught in a spell (1130 and 1221). The magic of the ring would seem to affect others and not Yvain.

There is no indication that Yvain follows instructions, turning the stone to the palm of his hand. He is at all times apparently visible to Lunete, eating a good meal while waiting for the attackers (1046-54). There is no reason for him to be a prisoner in this room. He could have been hidden elsewhere as Lunete later offered (1569-74), for example in the little room from which Lunete fetched his meal (1046-50). He is a prisoner of Lunete's words which confine him to this one room and warn him that his safety depends on lying on the bed without moving, whatever happens (1060-66). She tells him exactly what will happen and that if he is not afraid he may well enjoy the spectacle of the search (1074-79). Lunete's account of this episode to Gauvain (2426-33) indicates that she herself enjoyed the sight, although Yvain, who finally confesses fear, does not (1262-70). The plan is succeeding.

In the last stages of the search, Laudine's men strike the bed upon which the fully armed knight is lying. He seems not only invisible but insubstantial. They search under stools as if he were able to change form and size at will. He is indeed a "fantôme", but not because of the ring. He has been identified as a knight of Arthur's court and as the murderer of the lord of the castle. He is so susceptible to the power of Lunete's admonitions that not even repeated accusations of cowardice make him declare himself. He is a creature of myth: illustrious of lineage, a proven fighter and one who unquestioningly accepts the rules of the adventure. He is also totally without scruples. What humanity he possesses he shares with the corpse bleeding before him: he is not immortal. His inhumanity is moral, the figurative translated to the literal by the theme of invisibility.

Lunete's account of her machinations will make Gauvain laugh. The scene of the hunt is indeed a comic one, almost a burlesque, because the searchers do not simply assume that Yvain must be there, they know he is there. Laudine addresses him as if he were visible after a lengthy statement explaining that he is not (1206-42). The searchers make statements of precisely what they can see and what they cannot see (1111-31), elucidating their reasons for believing that Yvain must be there in a manner too clear to be consistent with the rage of their grief. Their assumption that he cannot escape is a psychological, not a physical truth about Yvain who could at any time walk out either of the two main doors from the moment they are opened or use the little doorway through which Lunete passes so easily. So sure are they that he has already been frightened into submission, they take no precaution, entering all at once (1101-3), for they expect to find him where he is, on the bed. And when they finally strike the bed, the one detail not foretold by Lunete, it is not an empty gesture but a deliberate one; this is their vengeance, just as the accusations of cowardice and foul play are the punishment meted out by Laudine.[15]

Yvain and the reader are witnessing a scene which has been previously witnessed by Lunete, and acted out before perhaps several times by the people of the castle. The grief and the rage are counterfeit; the narrator describes them as surpassing anything written in a book (1173-76). Laudine's transition from a state of blind hatred to one of equally blind love can be partially explained by the fact that the hatred was not real but pretended. The remainder of the explanation lies in the dubious nature of the love she bears Yvain.[16] The blindness of her people is not more real than Yvain's invisibility, except in the figurative sense that they are blind to everything except their own interest which is that they procure for themselves someone who will defend the fountain for they have no desire to do so. The reality behind the comedy which is performed ~~is~~ a brutal one.

Laudine is the lure for the final act. Yvain, observing her through a tiny window, is seized with a passion for her. As she pretends to grieve her dead husband, he also grieves, not for her or out of sympathy for her grief, but for her hair, her eyes, her face, the beauty which she is mutilating in her grief (1465-94). He has no remorse for the deed he committed. Later he will tell her that he killed in self-defense (2001-6) and Laudine will agree that this is the right way to consider the affair (2007-9). Even as he watches Laudine, Yvain is preoccupied with what Kay will say (1343-57). Calogrenant has been forgotten. As the doors close again, he is held prisoner of Love (Amors) and Shame (Honte)(1535-36). His shame is that his victory will not be believed if he leaves now. Laudine herself will be the proof of his victory. Lunete, aware of his love for Laudine, tests him to see if he still wishes to leave (1569-74), offering to release him from his "prison" (1571). Yvain protests that he will not leave like a thief, at night, but before all and honorably (1575-81). Lunete is now confident that Yvain is caught. There remains only the ritual which she and Laudine must perform so that all guilt may be washed from Laudine's hands.

The dialectic of Laudine's conversion is acted out according to the fiction that the fountain must be defended by a better knight than the dead man (1609-15, 1660-65, 1678-81, 1696-1703).[17] "Better" is to be interpreted as "stronger" as a knight, while at the same time Laudine would seem to entertain the idea that Yvain will therefore be "better" as a lover. There are no moral connotations to the word. Lunete persuades Laudine of her duty to protect her people against Arthur, "qu'il seisira tot, sanz desfansse" (1641). The reader knows that Arthur is not going to seize anything. It becomes clear that it is Laudine's honour which is at stake (1676), not her lands.[18] Laudine's honour consists of her sovereignty over her knight, not her lands. The principle is courtly, not feudal. Because of her faith that Lunete is acting in her best interests, Laudine lets herself be easily convinced (1642-43, 1743-54). Or, as Whitehead says, "Chrétien has of course flagrantly shifted his ground; it is the honesty of the go-between and not the propriety of her arguments that are now in question."[19] Laudine's protestations are a formality. She now creates an interview in her own mind with Yvain. It takes the form of a trial during which Laudine persuades herself by her own arguments that Yvain must be acquitted: "j'ai bien et a droit jugié" (1774). Further she must love and not hate him (1775-82). Her only concern is for her reputation: no one must be able to say (retrere, dire) that she is marrying the man who killed her husband (1809-12). She is well aware of the truth, and also of the fact that others will also know the truth. Her unique concern is with appearances, as it has been since her husband died. Laudine knows that Yvain is there in the castle when she suggests that one day will be sufficient to "have" him: "-Et quant le porrons nos avoir?" (1822) Both play the game, Lunete protesting that a bird could not fly so quickly and Laudine claiming that a full moon will allow night travel.[20] Chrétien uses ambiguity deliberately in this exchange, the subject of which could be either the messenger sent for Yvain, or Yvain himself. It concludes with Laudine's promise to reward "him" on his return with whatever "he" wants (1828-43). When the final decision is made for "the third day", Lunete tells Laudine to raise the subject of the fountain defense with her barons. Since none will take on the burden, Laudine will say that she must marry and that her hand has been asked for. Laudine is to request the barons' consent to the marriage. Lunete concludes:

> et si vos an mercieront
> que fors de grant peor seront. (1865-66)

They both know that the barons will accept without surprise the statement that Laudine's hand has been sought within the twenty-four hours that have seen her grieve and bury her husband. They know the truth. The pretense continues among them all as Lunete "fet sanblant" to find Yvain, all the while instilling in her pupil the necessity of complete subservience to his lady (1921-44). She does not tell him he is to marry her.

Upon first being brought into Laudine's presence, Yvain is too frightened to move or speak (1952-60), thus continuing to allow himself to be manipulated by the two women, just as he has been all along. Laudine is able to conduct her trial along much the same lines as she had imagined. Yvain's offer to submit to whatever she wishes is countered with "Non, sire? Et se je vos oci?" (1981) This brutal retort reflects the truth of Yvain's future position at Landuc. He must be prepared to die for her, but the question is later more elegantly phrased:

> -Et oserfez vos enprandre
> por moi ma fontainne a desfandre?" (2035-36)

This is the crucial question. With Yvain's acceptance, the interview ends. Laudine does not tell Yvain that she has sought permission of her barons to marry, but simply that they wish her to marry him (2042-50). Their reason: "por le besoing que il i voient" (2046). The need for a defender is the one thing these "blind" people see very clearly.

The seneschal's speech is a reprise of the myth: their lands will be devastated by Arthur. The sixty year custom must be maintained. Therefore, with a passing lament for the dead man, he encourages the future marriage (2083-2106). Laudine speaks in her turn emphasizing the fact that Yvain is putting himself in her service to defend her honour (2118-19). She implies that there has been an ardent and honourable courtship and that she should not refuse such a worthy husband (2115-33). The marriage takes place that same day. The moral position of the married couple is made explicit:

> Mes or est mes sire Yvains sire,
> et li morz est toz obliez;
> cil qui l'ocist est mariez;
> sa fame a, et ensanble gisent;
> et les genz ainment plus et prisent
> le vif c'onques le mort ne firent. (2166-71)

These are the facts which have been hidden by the tacit consent of all.[21]

In view of what has been said above the futility of evaluating Lunete's guilt or innocence can be appreciated. Her actions are dictated by the custom of the castle and supported by the rest of the cast.[22] To assume that Laudine is the unwilling victim of a plot is to ignore the incredible rapidity with which she overcomes her grief and concerns herself with the practical considerations. I think one can believe Lunete when she says to Yvain that she acted primarily out of concern for her lady's welfare (3646-54). As it happens, however, the fault is not Lunete's at all, but that of Yvain for his failure to return (3655-60).

To resume, none of the participants ever recognizes the fountain as a symbol of lady's sovereignty over her knight. Lunete and all those who experience the final tempest consider it real. Once again Laudine is subject to the same arguments, that a defender must be found (6546-65), but this time the knight-lady relationship is more specific:

> S'est or ensi que vos n'avez
> qui desfande vostre fontainne,
> si sanbleroiz fole et vilainne;
> molt bele enor i avroiz ja
> quant sanz bataille s'an ira
> cil qui vos a asaillie. (6558-63)

The assault upon the fountain is an assault upon Laudine. If there is no defender, the honour goes to the attacker. Laudine is not simply the proof of victory which Yvain requires to avenge himself of Kay's taunts. She is continual proof of prowess to the knight who fights to prove her sovereignty or her status as lady, and who wins. It is the response to the challenge of the storm which is important, not the prevention of the storm. If there is no defender, Laudine's status as lady ceases to exist. Unless she finds a defender, she loses her sovereignty to the assailant. Yvain's final attack on the fountain is a confrontation between the Yvain, fantôme and believer in courtly love, and his identity as the Chevalier au Lion, who wishes to take his place as husband. It is a confrontation between the fiction of Amors and amors. The tempest at the end is his reaction to Laudine's domination, a direct attack as opposed to his two previous withdrawals. He wins because Laudine allows herself to be trapped by words once again and refuses to commit perjury. She must therefore comply with her promise to reconcile the Chevalier au Lion with his lady. She has been taken by the game of truth:

> Au geu de la verté l'a prise
> Lunete, molt cortoisemant. (6624-25)

Laudine is forced to recognize her husband: "c'est mes sire Yvains, vostre espos" (6748).

There is a very close relationship between Lunete and Gauvain, the moon and the sun, the two people essential in their own spheres to the maintenance of the illusion. Without Gauvain no one would believe in Arthur's court, for he bears the burden of the myth. The same cannot be said of Lunete. She is the reflected light of the sun, the one who transmits the myth but is still rooted in a world where caritas provides stability and Amors destroys. She alone at Landuc was kind to others. The disinherited sister found her praying in that same crumbling chapel which had been her prison. For her, the adventure into illusion was almost fatal. For Gauvain, the world beyond illusion does not exist, at least in this romance.

Pesme Aventure

Pesme Aventure is not, like Landuc, the application of fiction to reality. In Landuc, words created the perpetuation of the myth which was ultimately defeated by a recognition of reality. Pesme Aventure on the contrary is a purely fictional creation within the romance, sharing with Landuc only its quality as a lure for the adventure-seeker, that is to say, for the knight who responds to the threat of death or dishonour with a determination to try his strength against any opponent, according to the myth which Yvain himself expounded to Gauvain's brother-in-law (3902-5).

The relationship with the fiction of adventure is established by the silk workers' explanation for their misfortune. Their king, a "fos naïs" (5254) went about from court to court seeking "noveles" until he fell into this trap and was obliged to pay for his life by sending thirty maidens a year into hard labour. In other words, fiction replaced reality for the young man who created an adventure for himself, sacrificing others to indulge his fantasy.[23] The women themselves believe they are prisoners whose liberation depends on the defeat of two demons. On the other hand, the lord of the castle believes in "the test". His daughter cannot marry any other than the one who defeats the demons. The daughter is first seen reading a "romans" (5360) to her parents. The narrator claims that he does not know the author of the book, nor does he state the nature of the "noveles" which were collected by the silk workers' king, but the word is used twice in this romance to refer to tales of chivalry or love (12-13, 657-60) told at Arthur's court. Against this background the adventure unrolls.

In other adventures one can state that single combat might have been avoided had anyone in authority chosen to use common sense, but, in most cases, by the time Yvain appears there is no other recourse. Here there is no real danger, no necessity to fight, no necessity to believe what anyone says, yet Yvain believes everything because he believes in adventure, led into it by his "fins cuers" (5170).[24] The people outside the castle mock him to warn him away. There is here an echo of Calogrenant's admonition to listen with the ears and the heart: a wise old lady explains to him that if he only knew how to hear (5141), he would realize that they are trying to frighten him with good reason, but that he is perfectly free to enter or depart as he wishes. Theoretically, Yvain is not a free agent. He has a previous commitment. The man who anguished over the choice between saving Gauvain's family and saving Lunete is gone. In his stead is the Gauvain-figure who operates on the principle that one must take on any adventure which offers itself. Yvain presents the feeble excuse that he needs lodging for the night:

> -Dame, fet il, se je creoie
> vostre consoil, je ouideroie
> que g'i eüsse enor et preu;
> mes je ne savroie an quel leu
> je retrovasse ostel hui mes." (5157-61)

"If I believed . . .", he says, but he does not believe. The repeated admonition that he is a free man able to decide (5164) is ignored. Yvain is compelled to enter by the call to adventure.

The story recounted to Yvain by the silk workers does not arouse in him any noticeable compassion. He is detached, placing the whole matter in the hands of God (5332-38). Strangely enough, as he proceeds through the castle he finds no one. There is obviously nothing between the three hundred women and the door but a bad-tempered porter, whom Yvain, with or without his lion, could no doubt have persuaded to let the damsels go, were it not that the adventure demands the defeat of the demons.

The following morning, Yvain is promised the daughter as wife if he defeats "deus miens sergenz" (5465). For Yvain, these men are devils because the damsels told him so. They are diabolical because that is the role they play in the adventure. For no apparent reason the lord of the castle feels compelled to continue the custom of the combat, "une molt fiere deablerie" (5461-63). He is almost apologetic as he explains that his daughter cannot marry until the demons are dead or defeated. Yvain accepts this as adequate necessity, encouraged no doubt by the accusation of cowardice (5488). The demons demand the removal of the lion because otherwise the fight would be two against two, which would scarcely be fair: "Vos devez seus estre et nos dui" (5550). Again Yvain accepts this as reasonable and looks the lion away. When the battle is going very badly, the resourceful lion digs his way out from under the door and rescues his master, winning the battle for him.[25] Yvain demands the release of the silk workers, a detail which the father had neglected to mention as part of the contract. Offered the daughter, he discourteously rejects her.[26] The father insists that he must comply with the custom or the door will not be opened. Yvain then makes a deceitful pledge (5744-48), esteemed of no value by the infuriated father, and walks out much as he could have done at any time. He has once again been held prisoner by nothing more than words in which he believes because they correspond to his concept of adventure as the road to perfection.

Deceit and self-deceit are the foundation of the fountain myth at Landuc. Deceit here is not pertinent since what is and what is not ultimately depend upon what Yvain accepts as true.[27]

The Theme of Love

Love as Amors is announced in the prologue as the theme of the romance. Chrétien develops the idea that love is no longer what it used to be, for it has become *fable et mançonge* (27). Those who say they love, feel nothing and lie (24-26). They are boasting of something which is not rightfully theirs (28). Chrétien suggests that in telling a tale of Arthur he is returning to an earlier golden age of love (29-32).[28] With this topos as a bridge he changes the subject from love to chivalry, to the court under the rule of King Arthur. However, the first view of the court belies the introduction. Arthur, "la cui proesce nos enseigne que nos soiens preu et cortois" (2-3), is asleep, worn out from dalliance with his wife (42-52). Outside the door Calogrenant commences a tale not of honour but of shame (60). Before he can begin, Kay picks a quarrel with him on a point of etiquette, and is subsequently rude to the queen.[29] At first glance neither love nor chivalry seem to fulfill the promise of the prologue.[30]

The blurring of the demarcation lines between "then" and "now" is done throughout the romance to coincide with shifts between fiction (then) and fact (now).[31] Amors as an absolute courtly ideal is to be found wherever belief in fiction has distorted fact. Its ascendance is marked by a corresponding eclipse of amors as charity, and a corresponding disintegration of the society afflicted.

Landuc is such a society. The text makes it amply clear that Yvain's love for Laudine is a combination of desire for the lady and desire for irrefutable proof of his victory. In marriage both desires are satisfied: Laudine becomes the symbol of Yvain's knighthood. He, in turn becomes the symbol of her rank as lady. Their relationship is identical to that between Maboagrain and his lady. However, Maboagrain and his lady sealed themselves away from society, whereas Laudine purports to govern a group of people bound together only by their determination to adhere to a sixty year-old myth.

Yvain's love for Laudine is expressed in courtly rhetoric[32] deliberately used for ironic purposes. Truth is revealed by literal translations of courtly metaphors: Yvain is love's prey (1363); he and Laudine are enemies (1364, 1454, 1460 and 1463); he is a prisoner of love (1446, 1912-44). In this case fiction has become fact. Yvain has been hunted and imprisoned by one who is indeed his enemy since she proposes to use him as a fountain defender. The lack of love between the two affects the whole community. Resentments rise and hatred flares as Laudine's seneschal makes Lunete the scapegoat for the refusal of all of them to recognize the external contingencies of life. The rhetoric of love is a device used to conceal the total absence of feeling, as was foreshadowed in the prologue:

> or est Amors tornee a fable
> por ce que cil qui rien n'en santent
> dient qu'il aiment, mes il mantent,
> et cil fable et mançonge an font
> qui s'an vantent et droit n'i ont. (24-28)

Passages on love frequently take the form of debates. The monologues are inner debates which form the basis of the dialogue between Laudine and Yvain, each one acting out the role previously established by the monologue. These are rituals of speech used to conceal the fact that Laudine is marrying her husband's murderer. Debate may also take place within the narrator's mind or between himself and the reader.

The long passage describing Love as leaving all her old haunts to give herself entirely to Yvain (1379-1409) is again a form of debate.[33] The narrator's confidence in the wisdom of Love's choice alternates with his doubts about Love's punctiliousness. Love is capable of inhabiting places where honour is hated and blame loved (1404) but he concludes, apparently with confidence, that in this case Love has not made such a mistake (1407-9). The next two lines abruptly place enor and blasme within a a different context:

> Quant en ot anfoï le mort,
> s'an partirent totes les genz; (1410-11)

The debate, internally structured to place Love beyond any but her own laws, is ultimately confronted with the reality of the dead man soon to be replaced by one whose love of an idealized honour has replaced all moral considerations. The rhetoric of love is capable of creating a fictional morality that inverts the normal meanings of such concepts of value as enor and blasme.

In the above example rhetoric, or fiction, is juxtaposed with fact, providing an abrupt contrast. It may, however, undermine itself much more subtly. In the long passage describing how Yvain's heart remains with Laudine while his body accompanies Gauvain, the dialectic concludes with the narrator's prophecy that hope within the heart will be betrayed, for Gauvain will not let the body return. Yvain thus remains heartless for a considerable period of time, unafflicted by any of the psychological or physical considerations raised in the passage (2641-71).[34]

Love at Landuc is a matter of words. Upon the occasion of the festivities welcoming Arthur, what Frappier refers to as Chrétien's concessions to courtly hedonism[35] are empty even of uncourtly hedonism:

> si s'i porront molt solacier,
> et d'acoler, et de beisier,
> et de parler, et de veoir,
> et de delez eles seoir,
> itant en orent il au mains. (2449-53)

This is an ironic reduction of the favours bestowed until all that really occurs is a semblance of love:

> et la dame tant les enore
> chascun par soi et toz ansanble,
> que tel fol i a cui il sanble
> que d'amors veignent li atret
> et li sanblant qu'ele lor fet;
> et cez puet an nices clamer
> qui cuident qu'el les voelle amer;
> quant une dame est si cortoise
> qu'a un maleüreus adoise
> qu'ele li fet joie et acole,
> fos est liez de bele parole.
> si l'a an molt tost amusé. (2456-67)

The receiver of the lady's attention is quickly duped by words, "de bele parole". The impact of sensuality in the opening lines diminishes steadily revealing the promise of love in any sense to be vain.

Prior to the judicial combat, the debate on Love and Hate is the verbal counterpart of the duel about to take place. Like the duel it ends in a stale-mate (6064-74). The narrator's faith in Love is not shaken (6007-8 and 6045-6), but he is grievously perplexed that Love can be ruled by Hate. While the narrator is ostensibly discussing the love which exists between Yvain and Gauvain, his comments are equally applicable to that which separates Yvain from Laudine. Love is unable to recognize her friends:

> Por ce est Amors avuglee
> et desconfite et desjuglee
> que cez qui tuit sont suen par droit
> ne reconuist, et si les voit. (6053-56)

This passage is very similar to the one describing the search made by the "blind" people of Landuc:

> Si seroit solaz et deliz
> a home qui peor n'avroit,
> quant gent si avuglez verroit:
> qu'il seront tuit si avuglé,
> si desconfit, si desjuglé,
> que il anrageront tuit d'ire; (1074-79)

The blindness of Love and Hate stems from the inability to see beyond the myth or the ritual which at Arthur's court and at Landuc is based on mortal combat. It stems also from the replacement of individual personality by anonymous abstraction. Laudine and Yvain see each other as "the knight" and "the lady". Gauvain and Yvain see only their function as knights. Reconstruction of the outside world according to fictional roles produces anonymity. As in Erec, anonymity is not simply a lack of some external identifying mark. It represents a denial of one's own personality and powers of reason, or a negation of the right to apply personal judgment to the management of one's own life. It symbolizes the irrational quest for escape into a fictional world where personal responsibility is replaced by a purely rhetorical morality.

While *Amors* proves an unstable basis for rational action, *amors* also has meaningless and ritualistic aspects. All through his romances, Chrétien's heroes observe the rituals of Christianity. Mass is heard regularly even at *Pesme Aventure*:

> s'oïrent a une chapele
> messe qui molt tost lor fu dite
> en l'enor del Saint Esperite.
> Mes sire Yvains aprés la messe
> oï novele felenesse
> quant il cuida qu'il s'an deüst
> aler, que rien ne li neüst;
> mes ne pot mie estre a son chois. (5448-55)

A hasty mass in honour of the Holy Ghost is followed by Yvain's loss of freedom of choice. Freedom has been replaced by slavery to fiction. The ritual of mass for Yvain is as empty as that which he is to perform in the name of adventure.

At Landuc, the burial of Esclados is performed as a Christian ceremony but the narrative is broken by a discussion of Love (*Amors*). The marriage is also presented as a Christian rite (2158-60). Laudine is qualified as Christian in an ambiguous and ironic context:

> Que qu'il aloient reverchant
> desoz liz, et desoz eschames,
> vint une des plus beles dames

> c'onques veïst riens terrïene
> De si tres bele crestïene
> ne fu onques plez ne parole; (1144-49)

She is described as more beautiful than anything seen by any earthly creature; such a beautiful Christian has never been described. Chrétien's comment lies in the juxtaposition of bele and crestïene, the latter quality being a fictional invention (plez ne parole). Or perhaps it is easier to say that a Christian woman of such beauty as hers, simply does not exist.

At Pesme Aventure the daughter's beauty is such that the god of love himself would be willing to take human form, inflicting love's wounds upon himself to serve her (5368-78). Like everything else at Pesme Aventure, the image is exaggerated. Chrétien is amusing himself by dealing frivolously with the excesses of Provençal courtly literature. His attitude toward the Church is not at all frivolous. The deliberately exaggerated image, melding into one the figure of Christ and that of Eros reveals an author very much aware that to confuse the two is to be in a state of abysmal error, as indicated by the narrator's refusal to discuss further the wounds in question.

It is at Pesme Aventure also that the three hundred silk workers would seem to regard Yvain, almost at the nadir of his achievements, to be Christ himself (5774-77). Frappier quite rightly says that this "phrase superlative" is not impiety:

> Il ne paraît pas douteux en revanche qu'elle vise à exalter autant qu'il se peut la fonction du chevalier, à l'entourer d'une majesté religieuse et à faire du héros une sorte de messie, non pas celeste mais terrestre, au service d'une humanité souffrante . . . Cette chevalerie évangélique n'est pas non plus très loin de ressembler à une mission et elle n'est certes pas en désaccord avec l'idéal qu'enseignait l'Eglise.[36]

Frappier is convinced, as is almost everybody who reads Chrétien, that the author's view of knighthood and of love is at one with the teachings of the Church. Chrétien is not impious, but he is certainly irreverant with a purpose. He revels in pointing out the discrepancies between morality based on reason and that curious manifestation of morality which appears in adventure fiction and in courtly love literature.

Frappier's error is that he is trying to make the message correspond to a steadily ascending moral progression on the part of the hero, on the understanding that Arthur's ideals are worthy ideals. For this reason his attention is given, in the final duel, to the fact that Yvain represents the right cause, whereas Gauvain does not, and he fails to consider the problem that Yvain is so prompt to admit defeat:

> Très lucidement, Yvain puise la force morale qui l'anime au combat dans sa conviction qu'il est le chevalier du droit. Par la grâce de Chrétien il formule dans un style énergique le principe spirituel qui était le fondement du duel judiciaire à une époque de foi où l'on admettait très aisément la coincidence de la justice et de la victoire.[37]

Justice and victory tend to coincide in geste where combat is not only necessary but glorious. Romance is not usually concerned with justice or with questions of faith. From Frappier's remarks, however, one can understand that since the adventures culminate in a duel which has the appearance of being honourable, legal and under the direction of a lawgiving prince,[38] the adventures seem to move Yvain ever closer to knightly perfection. However, unilateral trial by ordeal was removed from ecclesiastical auspices, although not specifically disallowed, by Canon 18 of the Fourth Lateran Council convened by Pope Innocent III in 1215. Concerning bilateral ordeal, judicial duels, the censures of 1139 and 1179 were renewed. Although trial by ordeal continued in France, reform in England followed in the wake of a climate of scepticism regarding the validity of such trials.[39] In France it was sometimes argued that the ordeal was efficacious as a deterrent in the case of heinous crimes, or as a means to establish fact as opposed to law which could be determined by more rational means. At the time that Chrétien wrote, the Church itself was divided on the issue, using ordeal where it was advantageous on the one hand and on the other, speaking out against it very strongly through men like Peter the Chanter (d. 1179), who was, according to J. W. Baldwin, likely one of the two moving spirits behind the canon of 1215, "which marked the beginning of the end of ordeals in European society."[40] So that, although the practice continued, there was a prevalent theory that God should not be tempted where rational deliberation would serve.[41] It was obvious that God did not perform miracles of intervention on any regular basis.

In Yvain, the climate of scepticism is apparent. Laudine's seneschal intends to prove false charges by fighting three against one. The elder sister choses the best knight in the world to defend her decision to disinherit her sister. Only at Arthur's court, or among people who believe in Arthur's court, it is seriously maintained that combat is an infallible measure of moral or legal "right".

Yvain deals with various illusions concerning justice, just as Erec undermines the mystique of kingship and nobility. Laudine's verbal trial of Yvain is a mockery of justice, as is the trial by combat arising out of fabricated charges against Lunete. Faith Lyons recognizes in the two demons of Pesme Aventure, two professional champions in traditional costume,[42] in which case Chrétien is expressing his view of a system which uses hired killers by calling these men demons. The essence of adventure is that honour goes to the victor regardless of the merits. The essence of the judicial combat in Yvain is exactly the same but expressed differently: the stronger knight is deemed to have won by virtue of divine intervention. Chrétien merges these two concepts and presents Arthur's court as the focal point where they coincide in the final duel. In this way he makes his comment on the uselessness of single combat in arriving at decisions which should be made from examination of the facts and the law by qualified people.

Arthur's court emerges, therefore, as a fictional locus amoenus where nothing unpleasant can ever really happen. In itself it is devoid of moral significance. Its pretentions in the realm of chivalry and love create a vast myth which, when taken seriously, place man's deliberative faculties in grave jeopardy.

NOTES

[1] The same phenomenon is found in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. See D. H. Green, "Irony and Medieval Romance," *AR*, p. 61.

[2] For the traditional view that Yvain's adventures represent continuous moral or chivalric rehabilitation, see Jean Frappier, *Etude sur "Yvain" ou "Le Chevalier au Lion" de Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris: Société d'Edition d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1969), pp. 23-24: "Le héros accomplit la reconquête de son bonheur et accroît son mérite en prenant une conscience plus vive de ses devoirs et de sa mission de chevalier; les aventures se succèdent selon une progression destinée à illustrer sa volonté continue de se dépasser lui-même, sans que cet ordre ascendant soit d'une rigueur absolue, car le développement d'un conte n'est pas comparable à un mécanisme d'horlogerie." See also the chapter on *Yvain* in the following studies: Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris: Hatier, 1968); Myrra Borodine, *La femme et l'amour au XII^e^ siècle* (1909; reprinted Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1967); Gustave Cohen, *Un grand romancier d'amour et d'aventure au XII^e^ siècle* (1931; reprinted Mayenne: Joseph Floch, 1948); U. T. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970); Z. P. Zaddy, *Chrétien Studies* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1973). See also Joseph H. Reason, *An Inquiry into the Structural Style and Originality of Chrestien's "Yvain"* (Washington: The Catholic University Press, 1958); Julian Harris, "The Rôle of the Lion in Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*," *PMLA* 64 (1949): 1143-63; Joseph J. Duggan, "*Yvain*'s Good Name," *OL* 24 (1969): 112-29; Alfred Adler, "Sovereignty in Chrétien's *Yvain*," *PMLA* 42 (1947): 281-305. Frappier's study of *Yvain* is the most comprehensive, informative and consistent.

[3] For a discussion of the order in which *Yvain* and *Lancelot* were composed, see A. Fourrier, "Encore la chronologie des oeuvres de Chrétien de Troyes," *BBSIA* 2 (1950): 69-88; and for the rebuttal, Jean Misrahi, "More light on the chronology of Chrétien de Troyes?" *BBSIA* 11 (1959): 89-120. In agreement with Misrahi that *Lancelot* preceded *Yvain*, I would further suggest that sufficient time elapsed between the two works to allow the audience for *Yvain* to be fully aware of the ignominy of Gauvain's failure in *Lancelot*.

[4] Frappier's only criticism of Gauvain would be that he defended a cause without inquiring into the merits. His generosity is thus "à la fois spontanée et imprudente", p. 144. He suggests however that in *Lancelot* and *Perceval*, which he considers Chrétien's last two romances, Gauvain loses prestige and "la mesure, la maîtrise de soi, cette sagesse d'abord égale à sa prouesse", *Yvain*, p. 141. Regarding Gauvain's urging Yvain to leave Laudine, Frappier feels this to be a sign of wisdom or good sense, p. 192. W. A. Nitze also considers Gauvain wise, "The Character of Gauvain in the Romances of Chrétien de Troyes," *MP* 50 (1952): 219-225. On the contrary, Gauvain corresponds to Erich Auerbach's concept of the ideal of *corteisie* (the replacement in romance of the ideal of *vasselage* found in the chanson de geste): it is "a personal and absolute ideal - absolute both in reference to ideal realization and in reference to the absence of any earthly or practical purpose." *Mimesis*, first published in 1946 (Berne: A. Franke Ltd. Co.), and translated by Willard Trask in 1953 (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 134.

[5] Frappier, *Yvain*, p. 212.

[6] Frappier, *Yvain*, p. 108-111.

[7] Harris, "The Rôle of the Lion," p. 1149.

[8] Peter Haidu, *Lion-queue-coupée* (Geneva: Droz, 1972), pp. 58-73.

[9] Haidu, *Lion-queue-coupée*, p. 72.

[10] In Foerster's edition of *Yvain*, a delay of forty days is granted both to Lunete ("Por respit de quarante jorz," 3691) and to the younger sister ("Au mains jusqu'a quarante jorz," 4803), *Der Löwenritter*, edited by Wendelin Foerster (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1867). In Roques' edition Lunete is granted thirty days (3685) and the sister fourteen (4797). If the Roques edition corresponds to Chrétien's choice of numbers, it may be inferred that Arthur did not know the rules of the duel, for which Cohen says that forty days was the customary delay. "Le duel judiciaire chez Chrétien de Troyes," *AUP* 8 (1933): 524.

[11] "Avec une sagesse et une finesse de Salomon, il eut recours à une ruse simple et efficace . . .", Frappier, *Yvain*, p. 55.

[12] ". . . un bon roi en train de rendre la justice avec autant de finesse que de fermeté de coeur; Arthur veille scrupuleusement au respect des formes légales dans la procédure du combat (4800-4804; 5912-18), mais il cherche très humainement à accorder les deux parties avant de recourir à cette procédure (4786-89), et il dénoue une situation apparemment inextricable (puisque le combat judiciaire s'est terminé sans vainqueur ni vaincu) de la façon la plus simple et la plus spirituelle, en forçant la soeur aînée à reconnaître sa mauvaise foi après l'avoir surprise par une question adroitement posée (6384-87). L'humour colore ainsi ce tableau de l'équité royale, mais nous plaindrons-nous que la figure légendaire du roi Arthur prenne un air de vérité quotidienne, tout comme celle de saint Louis dans la page fameuse de Joinville?" Frappier, *Yvain*, p. 138. The lines cited refer to the Foerster edition. The corresponding lines in Roques are: (4794-98; 5906-12) (4780-93) (6378-81). Saint Louis wanted to abolish the judicial duel: P. Fournier, "Quelques observations sur l'histoire des ordalies au Moyen Age," *Mélanges Gustave Gloz*, I (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1932): 375-76.

[13] Haidu, *Lion-queue-coupée*, p. 37-40, recognizes in the vavasour's castle and garden another form of the "verger" as it is found in *Erec* and *Cligès*; Calogrenant's lack of success with the daughter would be a prefiguration of his lack of success at the fountain. Chrétien's silence on the matter of Yvain's exploits in the garden would tend to support Haidu's interpretation.

[14] E. Peter Nolan, "Mythopoetic Evolution," *Sym* 25 (1971): 158-9, discusses this aspect of the fountain as an example of "reductio". The fountain becomes "a kind of complicated door-knocker".

[15] Haidu, *Lion-queue-coupée*, establishes a conflict between the conventional symbolism of the ring of invisibility, which is a "signe d'élection" (p. 32) designating the receiver as the hero of the adventure, and the unorthodox use of the bleeding corpse: "le sang est donc le signe précis de la présence hostile du meurtrier. Mais en littérature, le cours normal du récit ne s'arrête pas à la révélation abstraite de cette présence: cette découverte doit amener la capture et,

éventuellement, la vengeance. Ici, le signe, bien que parfaitement fondé, s'affirme être impuissant et coupé de ses suites normales. Cette coupure résulte de l'interférence de l'autre symbole qui cache le meurtrier et le protège." (p. 28). In accepting Haidu's analysis of the scene I would add only that Laudine's ultimate vengeance is the "capture" of Yvain as defender of the fountain.

16 For other views, see Borodine, *La femme et l'amour*, pp. 202-17; Frappier, *Yvain*, p. 149 and p. 190. See also F. Whitehead, "Yvain's Wooing," *Medieval Miscellany*, p. 322.

17 Whitehead, "Yvain's Wooing," p. 328: "Owing to a peculiarity of the *Yvain* plot, Laudine has to accept Yvain as husband not *in spite of* but *because of* his killing of her husband."

18 In some cases where I have interpreted *enor* as "honour" and not as land, the latter interpretation could also be argued. Most passages have either a deliberate ambiguity in this regard or a single definition of "honour".

19 Whitehead, "Yvain's Wooing," p. 330.

20 There is possibly a play on words with Lunete herself being the moon which will facilitate matters.

21 Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes*, p. 150: "Trois jours plus tard, grâce à l'habileté de Lunete, la 'demoiselle', Laudine, la dame, épouse le meurtrier de son premier mari, Esclados le Roux. Cette solution surprenante paraît naturelle et nécessaire, si juste est l'observation morale, si bien graduées sont les phases du revirement." This is lacking the reserve Frappier shows in *Yvain*, pp. 151-53, on the same subject.

22 Nolan, "Mythopoetic Evolution," p. 155: Lunete is "aware that the type-heroes (Laudine and Yvain) can survive only if the romantic illusion of existential coherence is maintained. This she furthers by telling little white lies to each, preventing the real from encroaching upon their own special worlds . . . One must at least consider the possibility that social ideals are being satirized and that their literary manifestations are being parodied."

[23] In a discussion of the meaning of adventure in courtly romance, Auerbach comments: "When we moderns speak of adventure, we mean something unstable, peripheral, disordered, or, as Simmel once put it, a something that stands outside the real meaning of existence. All this is precisely what the word does not mean in the courtly romance. On the contrary, trial through adventure is the real meaning of the knight's ideal existence." *Mimesis*, p. 135. Yvain and all those inhabiting the castle of *Pesme Aventure* consider adventure as providing the real meaning of the knight's existence. Within the context of Yvain's role as defender of the younger sister or the wider context of his role as husband, the adventure "stands outside the real meaning of existence".

[24] The Foerster edition reads "fos cuers" (5176). Since *fin* and *fos* are synonymous in this context, it makes little difference which reading is correct.

[25] The lion in *Yvain* and Enide in *Erec* perform comparable roles, each intervening out of devotion to save the irrational knight bent on self-destruction. The basic difference is that Enide is not effective. Love and reason, which prompt her actions, tend to alienate Erec from her and therefore from love and reason. Yvain's lion, on the other hand reflects or corresponds to Yvain's own recognition of his mortality and of the possibility of imminent defeat. Reason and love return to him, however briefly, upon the intervention of the lion, thus allowing him to accomplish that which he undertook by *amors* and to reject, temporarily, the concept of *Amors*.

[26] In keeping with romance tradition, Yvain's rejection of la Dame de Norison and of the daughter of the lord of the castle may be taken as gestures of fidelity toward Laudine as "lady". However, in the first instance Yvain had as yet no recollection of Laudine and in the second, the rejection is not of a lady but of a wife. Had Yvain stated that he was married upon entering the castle, there would no doubt have been no adventure.

[27] Nolan's comment is appropriate in connection with *Pesme Aventure*: "Although Yvain is clearly not a Don Quixote, I do wish to suggest that the fictional world of Yvain is a step in that direction." "Mythopoetic Evolution," p. 149.

[28] Haidu, *Lion-queue-coupée*, pp. 35-36: Chrétien's prologue recalls "la courtoisie sociale du nord de la France (vv. 8-11) et la courtoisie amoureuse du Midi (vv. 12-17), ce qui rehausse fortement le prestige littéraire. Il semble renchérir sur cette rhétorique élogieuse quand il recourt à une variante du *topos* de l'âge d'or, *topos* d'un passé admirable qui sert généralement de repoussoir au présent déchu . . . Notons ce que cette comparaison dut avoir de surprenant pour son premier public. Celui-ci, probablement très conscient d'assister à la naissance de la nouvelle mode courtoise, n'a-t-il pas éprouvé quelque doute sur le sérieux d'un auteur qui prétendait abandonner le présent pour un passé théoriquement plus courtois?"

[29] "Dispute discourtoise sur un point d'étiquette: quel procédé technique pourrait mieux saper les prétentions idéalisantes dont Chrétien, quelques vers auparavant, dotait ce chef-lieu de la civilisation romanesque courtoise?" Haidu, *Lion-queue-coupée*, p. 35.

[30] Tony Hunt, "The Rhetorical Background to the Arthurian Prologue," *AR*, suggests that Chrétien initially uses the type of *exordium* called *insinuatio* or indirect approach, which "may be used when the audience 'defessus est eos audiendo qui ante dixerunt' (Ad. Her. I, vi, 9). Suppose that Chrétien's audience, accustomed to the recitation of romances, had wearied of hearing the conventional prologues so many times . . . ", p.11. Chrétien's exordium of the *principium* type is to be found in Calogrenant's request for close attention to his words (the *audite-topos*), the whole passage being a self-contained *captatio benevolentiae* (p. 14).

[31] Karl D. Uitti, "Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*: Fiction and Sense," *RP* 22 (1969): 479: "Past and present are thus played off against each other, and the poem's attitude, a highly complex temporality amounting to a kind of timelessness, is established." He sees the prologue as a pact made with the audience as to the literary conventions being followed, while the subsequent events alert the audience to the fact that tradition is being disregarded.

[32] Faith Lyons, "Sentiment et Rhétorique dans l'*Yvain*," *Rom* 83 (1962): 370-77, presents a discussion of the rhetoric of love as taken seriously by the protagonists. She does not discuss the narrator's sceptical viewpoint.

[33] Whitehead, "Yvain's Wooing," p. 323, proposes that Love in withdrawing from former haunts is leaving Esclados' heart for Yvain's. This might well be sustained by the images of death used to describe ill-advised love, although I find it more likely that the images are used to form a contrast between a purely rhetorical death and the actual death of Esclados.

[34] Frappier, *Yvain*, notes that Chrétien's *préciosité* is diminished in *Yvain* by comparison with *Cligès* (p. 179) and that its use is not altogether traditional, as in this example (p. 180). He suggests that in *Yvain* Chrétien was expressing his disinterest in metaphors of courtly rhetoric, perhaps used only to please his public (p. 181).

[35] Frappier, *Yvain*, p. 187. He considers the last lines of this passage to be a form of "chastoiement": ". . . cet enseignement de l'auteur trace fermement une ligne de démarcation entre les usages du beau monde et l'amour véritable; la bonne grâce de la dame, son amabilité généreusement répandue sont des marques de sa beauté sociale . . .". p. 188.

[36] Frappier, *Yvain*, p. 207.

[37] Frappier, *Yvain*, p. 204.

[38] Gustave Cohen's article, "Le duel judiciaire," pp. 510-27, maintains this point of view.

[39] W. L. Warren, *Henry II* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), p. 321: "The Normans favoured a duel between the parties as a form of ordeal and brought it with them to England. In criminal cases it had to be fought between accuser and accused, but in civil cases the court might permit the substitution of champions. The ordeal at least had the advantage of decisiveness, but men of the twelfth century were less convinced than their predecessors of its efficacy in proving guilt or innocence. It was not until 1215 that the Church finally withdrew the long since weakened confidence in its use. Anglo-Saxon justice had not favoured the use of the ordeal in civil litigation, but preferred instead, when possible, to try to reach a judgement

on the testimony, under oath, of men who might be presumed to know the facts of the matter at issue."

[40] J. W. Baldwin, "The intellectual preparation for the canon of 1215 against ordeals," *Spec* 36 (1961): 635-36.

[41] Baldwin, "The intellectual preparation . . .," p. 620.

[42] Faith Lyons, "Le bâton des champions dans *Yvain*," *Rom* 91 (1970): 97-101.

CHAPTER IV

LANCELOT

Lancelot, the Anti-Knight

In recent years Chrétien's Lancelot has been interpreted as a Christien allegory[1] and as a eulogy of courtly love[2]. Between these two extremes, other critics are seeking a middle path which will take into account both the religious and the courtly elements and also admit deliberate use of irony and comedy. D. D. R. Owen proposes that the reflections of the Passion found in Cligès and Lancelot are parody but not comic:

> Certainly we have cause to smile as we reflect that Lancelot, who elsewhere in the romance is abject almost to the point of imbecility in his devotion to Guenevere, nevertheless appears to acquire through parody and his role of predestined savior an aura of near-divinity. Yet when we consider these elements apart from the burlesque which I take to underlie the rest of the romance, they have nothing of the comic about them. Again, it is the incongruity that strikes us.[3]

Comedy, in Chrétien, rarely makes the reader laugh because it is most pronounced in situations which purport to be serious. The reader, thrown off balance, is obliged to question the validity of the seriousness. With regard to the courtly interpretation,

A. H. Diverres proposes that the romance is a criticism of the courtly ethic:

> I am not denying, of course, that Lancelot and Guinevere's relationship is governed by the conventions of fin'amors, for does not Chrétien actually apply the term fin amant to Lancelot, the only time he uses it in his romances? What I believe to be less certain is the view that Guinevere and Lancelot are intended to exemplify a dompna and her lover according to the Provençal ideal. If my reading of the romance is correct, it contains criticism, implicit as well as explicit, of both characters' behavior.[4]

Thus we have the problem that Lancelot fails to exemplify either the Provençal ideal of the courtly lover or the ideal of the knight as the saviour-figure. In the latter case, convention requires the knight to fight selflessly in a noble cause, although the hero is rarely elevated to the position of Christ-figure; in the former, he fights only to prove that he merits the lady's love. Lancelot belongs, as will be shown, to neither literary convention for he is not a disinterested liberator nor is he the knight whose prowess and nobility of character are enhanced by love. These are roles imputed to him by others in the romance. Those who believe him to be the knight-saviour are "prisoners" awaiting liberation. The prisoners of the courtly love tradition are few and only one is specifically designated as a prisoner. Lancelot's progress is impeded primarily by those who recognize him for what he is, the Chevalier de la Charrette, a man who has renounced the ennobling function of combat and reduced the ideals of chivalry to empty verbal rituals. From the moment that he steps willingly into a cart symbolizing knightly dishonour, he ceases to glorify knighthood. Lancelot is himself a prisoner of the courtly lover tradition. He is convinced even after his failures, that no dishonour is really dishonourable if dictated by love (4347-60). His intermittent awareness of his own failure as a fighting knight (864-77, 1097-1111, 1438-45, 2717-25, 3704-8) is usually an expression of bewilderment that love, instead of improving his prowess, is diminishing it. This fear is fully substantiated by the narrator.

The cart episode in Lancelot, like many others, contains elements which are not clear. I am proposing a tentative approach to the Lancelot based upon the idea above, and intend to limit discussion to elements and episodes which sustain the argument, acquitting myself of the rest on the grounds that, to the best of my knowledge, it does not oppose the argument.

The cart is reserved for criminals, specifically for murderers and thieves, and those who have been defeated in trial by ordeal and therefore found guilty. Anyone who has been in a cart loses his honour and is never again welcomed in any court (321-44). When Lancelot asks after the queen he is informed that by riding in the cart he will have news of her. Lancelot hesitates because Reason advises him that he do nothing for which he will be ashamed or for which he may be blamed. But Love urges him to mount; shame is of little consequence to him as long as he does what Love commands (360-77). By love's typical metamorphosis, then, what is dishonourable becomes honourable. Gauvain's reaction is that it would be madness to exchange a horse for a cart, and Gauvain, unlike Lancelot, has a horse. It seems likely that in Lancelot the knight's horse is symbolic of his knighthood, as in Erec; and that Gauvain, riding out from Arthur's court with two extra horses is a superlative symbol of the knight, whereas Lancelot when he first reaches the cart is symbolically incomplete, having lost one of Gauvain's two horses and his own lance in the forest. He is disqualified for the knight-saviour role to which Gauvain adheres in word if not in deed. His predisposition to follow Love rather than Reason qualifies him already for the role of the knight-lover.

This does not mean that Gauvain prefers Reason to Love. Gauvain sustains his image with gallantry, not love, and courtesy, not reason. He always appears fully armed, even in the water. He does not continually lose both horse and arms, nor does he fall into distracted studies. He is the image of perfection and he does absolutely nothing. Love and Reason are equally meaningless to him, but getting into a cart is nonetheless to him a denial of ideal chivalry.

Lancelot's first encounter after receiving a fresh horse from Gauvain is shrouded in mystery (304-11). Lancelot is supposed to have the strength of seven men (1896-98) or even ten (1910-14). He is fully armed and has a fresh horse. It is inconceivable that he might be defeated by Meleagant. At the ford the next day he reflects that the day before he could have fought off a hundred men equal to the defender of the ford (872-77). His feeling that his prowess has diminished since the previous day would indicate no recollection of a defeat due to ambush or overwhelming numbers. Gauvain's assessment of the situation, that many knights had clashed (310-11), would not then be the explanation for Lancelot's lack of success. The most workable hypothesis is that Lancelot failed to win back Guinevere because Guinevere interfered, as she does later between Lancelot and Meleagant on two occasions, and also in the tournament. Lancelot has not yet mounted the cart of knightly dishonour, and she has not yet proven him her slave. He must be tested and proven worthy of her favours; therefore Guinevere is not yet ready to be rescued. This conjecture is sustained by the fact that Lancelot, after his initial impetuous pursuit of the queen, never again tries to intercept or catch up with her, content always to follow without haste but doggedly. Whatever happened in the forest, the result is that Lancelot abandons the knight-saviour role even prior to mounting in the cart. Since the cart is destined for those who have committed a fault inconsistent with a knight's rank or purpose in society, Lancelot's gesture, in mounting, is merely a confirmation of his prior acceptance of his new role as courtly lover. Throughout the rest of the romance he fails in various facets of knighthood.[5]

At the ford, which is Lancelot's first combat situation, he is so absorbed in his thoughts of Guinevere that he fails to hear a thrice delivered challenge forbidding him to cross. He is knocked from his horse into the water, losing his lance and his shield. The combat then consists of Lancelot's attempts, on foot and in the water, to wrest his mounted adversary's leg from its socket. At the request of the unfortunate victim for a more conventional battle, Lancelot demands a formal pledge that he not attempt to escape while the horse and the missing arms, qui par le gué flotant aloient (837), are recuperated. A more knightly combat then ensues, of which Lancelot is ultimately the victor. Still angry at having his meditations interrupted, he is prepared to kill his adversary. The knight's lady intervenes, asking for mercy, whereupon Lancelot demands only imprisonment which is also waived at the request of the lady. In this episode the classic knightly response to challenge is replaced by revery, the classic combat arrived at only after a watery wrestling match, and the classic largesse or pitié shown by the victor only upon the intervention of the victim's lady. As the episode progresses Lancelot becomes increasingly typical of idealized knightly conventions, observing at the end conventional amenities which still have some meaning to him.

A comparison of this episode to the last combat prior to Lancelot's arrival in Gorre, demonstrates to what extent Lancelot's knighthood is reduced to meaningless ritual. Challenged to a duel by a knight who mocks him because of the cart, Lancelot accepts the challenge for no reason that the reader is aware of until it becomes apparent that Lancelot, for all his pretended unwillingness to fight, has been angered by the mockery (2734-78). He is disturbed from dinner among friends, not from revery, and he rides out to battle the very epitome of the perfect knight (2659-76). After the combat has continued for some time he is ashamed, as he was before (864-71), that the combat lasts so long (2717-25); he applies himself more vigourously and, inspired by his recollection of the mockery, he wins. He offers the knight a choice between death and mounting in a cart, as opposed to the more traditional "prison" of the previous case. A knightly prison is now replaced by love's prison. A lady rides up on a mule, demanding the death of the vanquished knight, instead of his release (2796-2815). She gives no explanation except that the man is so *felon* and *desleal* that it is right that he should die. Lancelot is paralysed by an inner conflict between *pitié*, which urges him to release the knight who has asked for mercy, and *largesse* which urges him to obey the lady (2830-65). Lancelot is not undergoing an inner debate on the merits of the situation. He accepts the lady's word that the man must die. He is prepared to perform this service for her at the prompting of largesse, not because of any concept of justice. Pitié is not to be construed as compassion toward the vanquished knight. It is, like largesse, a stereotyped concept which evokes in Lancelot a stereotyped response. The conflict is purely rhetorical, completely disassociated from any rational application of the words to the situation. Faced with the illogical proposition that the man must be spared and yet must also die, Lancelot resolves the conflict by providing for both exigencies. He grants mercy so that the knight may fight him again with an advantage but with the proviso that if the knight loses, he dies. He is defeated more rapidly than before. While he pleads for his life, the lady demands his death. Lancelot tells the man that he can expect no further mercy and strikes off his head. The head bounces across the ground and the body falls. Lancelot picks up the head by the hair and offers it to the young woman who grasps it with joy (grant joie, 2927) wishing Lancelot a comparable joy in receiving what he wants most (2928-29). The lady spurs off clutching the head, as the reader uncomfortably compares this grisly scene with Lancelot's accomplishment of his greatest joy, the night with Guinevere. The death of this unknown knight is unparalleled in Chrétien, surpassing the death of the robber-knights in *Erec*, and that of Esclados in *Yvain*. It is frankly and intentionally appalling. Where Lancelot's previous gesture of *largesse* to a lady was one of clemency, he has now become a murderer as a result of idealizing "the lady". Like Yvain, Lancelot is dehumanized as a prerequisite to becoming a courtly lover.[6] This episode immediately precedes the crossing of the sword-bridge. It is the last victory which Lancelot will have until, at the very end of the romance, he beheads the defeated Meleagant, who does not ask for mercy and whose death is greeted with the same joy (7086-97). Meleagant is the epitome of the uncourtly figure. It is possible that the unknown knight was also guilty of anti-courtly behaviour. His preference for death as against riding in a cart would support this idea but since Lancelot at no time inquires into the exact nature of the fault committed by the man he kills, the reader remains in ignorance.

There is one other major combat during the adventures leading up to the passage into the castle of Gorre. Immediately following the ford episode, Lancelot encounters a young woman who offers him a night's lodging if he will sleep with her. She arranges her own test of Lancelot's prowess both as a knight and as a lover. A rape scene is staged and Lancelot is called to the rescue. The language used to describe the combat which ensues is a parody of _geste_ in a bedroom setting. Lancelot passes the first test, that of prowess in combat, to the lady's satisfaction; he fails, however, the second, remaining faithful to his pledge to go to bed with her while remaining faithful also to Guinevere. The young woman admires his singleness of purpose. The test of the knight's obligation to keep a pledge, however foolishly made, binds various facets of this episode together. It also reflects upon Arthur's determination that he must respect the pledge he made to Kay in the form of a "rash boon". The essence in both cases is that the honourable man must keep a promise even when the pledge itself has no moral or rational justification. To the damsel, Lancelot makes the pledge unwillingly but in his eyes, of necessity (956-64). Because he promises to sleep with her, she takes him home (965-72), and reminds him of the pledge after dinner (1040-42). "I shall keep your promise", he assures her (1043-44) and turns the matter over in his mind (1049 and 1057) until she calls for help, at which point she still has the remarkable presence of mind to remind him that since he pledged to go to bed with her it is not right that she should be raped by another before his very eyes (1070-79). Lancelot is paralysed by an inner debate, shocked to find himself affected as much as for the abduction of Guinevere, shocked also by his own hesitation which would indicate cowardice, and concludes that it is better to die honourably than to live shamefully.[7] As in the previously discussed episode, the inner debate is not an attempt to evaluate the situation, which in this case seems unequivocal. Lancelot's paralysis is again caused by conflicting abstract concepts. He must place this unforeseen development within the context of the pledge, which in turn places him in the rôle of the lady's lover. Since he cannot disentangle the two concepts, he accepts the unwanted role temporarily:

> "Se la voie m'estoit delivre,
> quele enor i avroie gié,
> se cil me donoient congié
> de passer oltre sanz chalonge?
> Donc i passeroit, sanz mançonge,
> ausi li pires hom qui vive
> et je oi que ceste chestive
> me prie merci molt sovant
> et si m'apele de covant
> et molt vilmant le me reproche." (1116-25)

There would be no honour in sleeping with the lady if he could enter unchallenged. He would be no better than the worst man alive if he were to sleep with the lady without in some way meriting her favours. The irony inherent in this reasoning is that Lancelot is not the lady's lover and has no intention of sleeping with her except in the strictest sense of the word *couchier*. He now hears the victim calling for help, reminding him of his pledge and reproaching him for his failure to keep it. In the midst of the following violent and bloody scene, the narrator breaks into the action suddenly to reassure the reader that Lancelot will keep his promise. The scene ends with a play of words and sounds, among them *couche*, *couchier*, *covient*, *covanz*, *convert* (1198-1220) as Chrétien's perspiring hero slips between the sheets, lies motionless on his back beside the obliging lady and looks straight up at the ceiling, like a lay brother whose orders forbid speech (*convert*, 1218). Lancelot has taken the verb *couchier* in its most literal sense. The pledge is therefore not really valid, for a pledge or oath has no purpose if intention and execution do not derive from a mutual understanding of the meaning of the words used by all those concerned. In Lancelot's mind the essential lies in his concept of *covanz*, since a knight must keep his pledge, that is, his word, the intention or the effect of the word being of no consequence.

The power of the word as distinct from its purpose is later more fully developed when Lancelot, having spent the night with Guinevere, undertakes to defend Kay on a charge of adultery with the queen. Formal oaths are taken on holy relics since Lancelot insists that this is necessary in such a legal proceeding (4943-47). Meleagant swears that Kay slept with the queen and took his pleasure with her. Lancelot accuses Meleagant of perjury and adds,

> Et de celui qui a manti
> praigne Dex, se lui plest, vangence
> et face voire demostrance. (4974-76)

Lancelot is not irreverent; he is merely single-minded. He has no intention of deceiving God or anyone else. He does not consider that he has done anything wrong in the eyes of God or man. Guinevere has asked him to defend Kay, and he does so as her obedient servant, knowing better than anyone except Guinevere that he speaks the truth. By suggesting that the judicial duel is a test of perjury, not adultery, of the word and not of the effect or intention of the word, Chrétien is expressing his disbelief in the effectiveness of trial by ordeal.[8] He is not, in my opinion, attributing any malicious intent to Lancelot. He is simply taking to its logical conclusion Lancelot's belief that nothing which he does at the command of Love or Guinevere could be dishonourable. The ritual of combat and the ritual suggested by words dislocated from their sense are all that remain of his knighthood.

The major combats of the romance therefore demonstrate Lancelot's failure to act as a rationally motivated knight. He is physically powerful but totally lacking in judgement on very fundamental issues. Other combats prior to his arrival in the castle are minor and their victories temporary or empty. The Passage de Pierres is presented as a major obstacle (2159-74), but proves exaggerated. Lancelot unhorses one man and the rest give up. The battle between the people of Gorre and those of Logres is supposed to give Lancelot his chance to show leadership. The armies are already fighting before he appears. The two main decisions, that of going to join the army and that of finding out which side Lancelot should be fighting on are made by one of the vavasour's sons (2308-11, 2367-77) while the other son, not yet a knight, makes his own decision to arm himself and enter the fray. Lancelot's inspiration by example is limited, whereas his renown and his supposed destiny as a saviour-figure are the deciding factors (2402-32). As a leader he remains undistinguished and the battle is inconclusive (2433-36). Once Lancelot has crossed the sword bridge, the two subsequent battles against Meleagant are stopped by Guinevere at the request of Bademagu. Guinevere controls Lancelot's later performance at the tournament. If one leaves aside the final unqualified victory over Meleagant, it can be affirmed that Lancelot has degenerated as a fighting knight, just as he feared in the ford adventure (872-77). All that remains of his identity as a knight is an allegiance to words such as covent, largesse or pitié. He is concerned about Gauvain, which demonstrates loyalty, but is taken prisoner before he can help him. Yet, that same night, he will be able to break the bars on Guinevere's window with his bare hands. He is incapable of any action requiring strength or prowess except in the cause of Love.

The Rules of Love and War

The episodes of most importance in portraying various aspects of Guinevere's relationship with both Lancelot and Meleagant involve the lady who arranges the rape scene. These episodes contain a series of tests. In the first of these, the lady offers herself freely to Lancelot and is refused. Lancelot's rejection of the offer sets him apart from the lady's suitor who is prepared to possess her even against her wishes. While this ought to be considered noble as a gesture of fidelity to Guinevere or otherwise, the narrator seems to mock Lancelot:

> Plusor sont qui de ce presant
> li randissent .v. .c. merciz,
> et il an fu trestoz nerciz,
> et il a respondu tot el: (946-49)

In the second test, the rescue of the lady and the fulfillment of the pledge, Chrétien employs broad comedy to indicate that Lancelot's reactions are atypical, if not unnatural. Lancelot lacks an instinctive or spontaneous response either to the sight of a woman in danger of being raped or to the presence of a beautiful and willing lady at his side in bed.[9] Before he acts he must understand his situation either in terms of his pledge or according to courtly criteria. There is a dichotomy since he evaluates courtly criteria in the first part of the test as if he were the lady's lover, but in the last part he gives up the privilege he thought he was fighting for in order to be faithful to Guinevere. He is at all times responding to various rules which have no connection with each other; consequently from every standpoint his behaviour is illogical. He understands that the second test is simply an elaboration of the first. The lady is giving him a chance to prove himself in battle so that sleeping with her will be an honourable and justly deserved reward for rescuing her. Lancelot recognizes the format, if not the details, which governs his relationship with Guinevere.[10] He recognizes this courtly concept of honour in a sudden flash of illumination (1116-25), and it is this concept which goads him into action as if the lady were Guinevere herself. Lancelot does not realize that neither the lady nor Guinevere are in any real danger. Guinevere is at all times protected by Bademagu, the upholder of the courtly tradition who is completely at her service. Guinevere also halts the battle when it is clear that her knight is winning. The combat is a necessary part of the performance, but a conclusive victory is not. The adversary is not a rival suitor but the lady herself. The staged combat preserves the appearance of integrity for both parties. By means of this earlier episode which prefigures the situation at Gorre, Chrétien pierces the panoply of courtly ritual, revealing it to be simply a means of satisfying sexual desire while clouding the moral issues.

The reader knows that Lancelot refuses the lady in the first and second tests because he is faithful to Guinevere. The lady, unaware of this, is not discountenanced. Her esteem for Lancelot increases:

"Des lores que je conui primes
chevalier, un seul n'an conui
que je prisasse, fors cestui,
la tierce part d'un angevin;
car si con ge pans et devin,
il vialt a si grant chose antendre
qu'ainz chevaliers n'osa enprendre
si perilleuse ne si grief;
et Dex doint qu'il an veigne a chief." (1270-78)

She assumes that he is chaste because he is pure. He has been transformed into the knight-saviour figure in her eyes. She has tested him in the courtly role. Now she places him in an essentially non-courtly situation, sure of his prowess in combat and also of his honourable intentions towards her. In this situation the knight is sovereign, not the lady:

Les costumes et les franchises
estoient tex, a cel termine,
que dameisele ne meschine,
se chevaliers la trovast sole,
ne plus qu'il se tranchast la gole
ne feïst se tote enor non,
s'estre volsist de boen renon;
et s'il l'esforçast, a toz jorz
an fust honiz an totes corz.
Mes, se ele conduit eüst
uns autres, se tant li pleüst
qu'a celui bataille an feïst
et par armes la conqueïst,
sa volenté an poïst faire
sanz honte et sanz blasme retraire. (1302-16)

The knight is bound to protect and honour the unaccompanied lady but may have her at his will if he wins her by force of arms. The first part of this test has already been passed by Lancelot when he refused to take advantage of the lady on their first encounter. The second part engages him to defend her against a suitor who might not treat her as well as he himself has done. As it happens, Lancelot is to be pitted against an uncourtly figure who is prepared to seize the lady without prior knightly combat, contrary to the first provision of the custom, but who is also prepared to fight to possess her even against her wishes simply because he loves her. Similarly Meleagant believes that because he has fought against Kay for the woman he loves, he is entitled to possess her. He is prepared to fight again to prevent Lancelot from winning her. Meleagant thus adheres to the old customs and usages "qui furent ainz que nos ne fumes el reaume de Logres mises" (1300-1301). This is not a courtly tradition although the knight is motivated by love or desire. Lancelot adapts to this tradition as easily as he adapted to the concept of honour presented in the previous test:

> "Et quant cil l'ot, si li conjure
> come cil qui ne cuidoit mie
> qu'amie ami, n'amis amie
> doient parjurer a nul fuer:
> "Se vos rien nule amez de ouer,
> dameisele, de par celi
> vos conjur et requier et pri
> que vos plus ne le me celez." (1400-7)

The conventional words of love are quite meaningless since Lancelot is simply trying to obtain information about Guinevere. The knight's love for the lady is supposed to make him strong in battle, but the tradition is not courtly because the lady is not sovereign. Her fate depends upon the outcome of a combat between two knights in principle equally desirous of her. The combat is not a formality for appearance, it is essential and the lady has no control over it.

The tests are essentially of two types, courtly and non-courtly. The courtly relationship between Guinevere and Lancelot is prefigured blatantly and without glamour in the attempted rape scene. On the non-courtly level, Lancelot, the lady and her suitor prefigure the situation existing between Lancelot, Guinevere and Meleagant. Lancelot's disinterested protection of the lady against her suitor is not typical of the non-courtly situation but prefigures the selfless purity of motive which is esteemed by Kay and the prisoners of Gorre to be the basis for Lancelot's rescue of the queen.

The tests involve two combats. In the first the lady intervenes and in the second the suitor's father intervenes because he suspects Lancelot to be the nameless liberator of the prisoners. In the combats against Meleagant both Bademagu and Guinevere jointly intervene. The position of the lady is identical in both intercessions; since she has proven that her knight will fight for her, a definitive victory is not necessary. Both fathers fear for their sons, but Bademagu feels that Lancelot's victory is certain because love has made him superior, whereas love has not so enhanced his own uncourtly son. He is not concerned with Lancelot's role as liberator, only with the fact that he has come for the queen.

In summary, the image of saviour and lover is sustained, but by different people, both at the *pré aux jeux* and in Gorre. The onlookers at the *pré aux jeux* see Lancelot, at first, as the dishonoured knight of the cart; the suitor's father sees Lancelot as a liberator; the son may assume Lancelot to be his lady's lover since that is indeed the role which Lancelot has been playing. At Gorre, the king sees Lancelot as the true courtly lover, ennobled by love and above reproach; the prisoners regard him as their saviour; Meleagant sees Lancelot as a rival in the physical possession of the lady and is perhaps the only one not under the shadow of illusion.

Arthur's Court: Illusion Challenged

Arthur's court in Lancelot demonstrates a low-keyed indifference to either chivalry or courtly love. The action which opens the romance is characterized by its irrelevance to either concept. One would expect Meleagant's arrival upon the scene to be climactic, followed by a vigourous response to a challenge thrown down. In Lancelot, high drama is all but lost in trivia. Meleagant's opening speech is a challenge to Arthur's knights and to Arthur himself: he holds prisoner knights, ladies and damsels from Arthur's lands and household, nor will Arthur be able to release them.

> "et saches bien qu'ainsi morras
> que ja aidier ne lor porras," (59-60)

This is not a suggestion that Arthur will die in the attempt, but that rescue is impossible. Arthur responds apathetically that he is very sorry,[11] but what one cannot change one must endure. The challenge is lost. Meleagant proceeds to the door without finding a voice to answer his. He then utters a second and rather different challenge:

> "Rois, s'a ta cort chevalier a
> nes un an cui tu te fïasses
> que la reïne li osasses
> bailler por mener an ce bois
> aprés moi, la ou ge m'an vois,

par un covent l'i atandrai
que les prisons toz te randrai
qui sont an prison an ma terre,
se il la puet vers moi conquerre
et tant face qu'il l'an ramaint." (70-79)

This is the challenge he came to give, for he had only pretended to be leaving (64-65). The court is stunned. Kay stops eating. If there is just one knight at court whom Arthur trusts enough with the queen, to win her by force from the intruder and bring her back, her release will guarantee the release of all the other prisoners. The first challenge proved that there was no disinterested knight-saviour figure at Arthur's court. This second speech is an uncourtly challenge of the courtly principles which are supposedly upheld at Arthur's court, since the knight who could win back Guinevere might well not bring her back, and Meleagant has already satisfied himself that there is no knight at court prepared to fight him just for the sake of the prisoners. Meleagant loves the queen (3279). He is asking if there is anyone at court who also loves her enough to fight for her. The challenge is made by one who has no use for courtly principles, knightly fair-play or any of the court's chivalric ideals. It is made to test whether the courtly ideals fostered by the "mainte bele dame cortoise, bien parlant an lengue françoise" (39-40) have any substance.

The challenge is answered by Meleagant's Arthurian counterpart, Kay, the resident critic of the illusion. That Kay alone should respond is itself indicative of the state of Arthurian ideals, but the manner in which he does so constitutes an attack upon those ideals which surpasses that of Meleagant. He demands that the king receive his resignation. While the king accepts everything that Meleagant says without hesitation, he is taken aback by this new challenge, not because it is ill-timed, but because he cannot believe it (93-96). When he states that there is nothing in the world which he would not give to have Kay remain, the reader is alerted to the inevitable, that Guinevere will be sacrificed. This awareness gives an added ironic dimension to the words and gestures of the unfolding scene. Kay responds that money is not in question. The king who had previously been only sorry about the matter (93), is now *molt despéré* (114). He begs the queen to use her influence, to plead with Kay and kneel before him, for without Kay he will never again be happy (116-27). The queen begs Kay to stay, all the knights beg him to stay, but Kay is adamant.

> et la reïne de si haut
> com ele estoit, as piez li chiet. (148-9)

The queen kneels, and refuses to rise until Kay does what she wants; and Kay agrees to remain if she and the king do what he wants. Whatever it is, says Guinevere, we will grant it. Thereupon she tells the king that he must grant Kay's wish. The king sighs with joy (168) and agrees. Of course, Kay asks for the queen, and the king is sorry all over again, so much so that his emotion is apparent (180-83), although not so much that he will go back on his word.

There is much generic irony in this scene. It is the intruder who should make Arthur commit himself to the "rash boon".[12] Had Kay been knightly, he would have knelt before Arthur to request the combat; had he been courtly he would have knelt before Guinevere. He is neither. He has addressed the king insolently as "tu" (87-92), and permitted the queen to kneel at his feet. Above all, in this world upside down,[13] the king is more concerned about the loss of his seneschal than the abduction of his wife. The courtly implications of Meleagant's challenge are lost upon Arthur, but not upon Guinevere who is suddenly transformed, upon leaving the court, from a dutiful wife into a demanding lady. With the exception of her distress at the thought that Lancelot had died before she was able to sleep with him, she enjoys the whole adventure.[14] Just as Guinevere is herself transformed, she transforms the adventure to suit her courtly needs. Under Meleagant's rules, she is not a lady, she is little more than the spoils of war, however much he loves her. She intends to dominate her knight, whom she will not permit to win her in battle, but whom she will test by destroying his will. Somehow in the forest Lancelot learns that conventional knightly tactics are not going to wrest Guinevere from Meleagant, that force of combat alone is not sufficient, and that he will have to answer the queen's challenge in quite a different way. His next move is to climb into the cart. The knight whose first appearance on the scene with an urgent request for a fresh horse, has also been transformed.

Everyone is upset at Guinevere's departure. The people at court grieve for her as if she were already dead, for they think she will never return alive (215-19). Their lack of confidence in Kay is evident when the return of his riderless horse is observed with much elbow-nudging and exchanges of winks (266-67). But for all their grief, not one person moves:

> mes a nelui n'an pesa tant
> que del sivre s'antremeïst
> tant que mes sire Gauvains dist
> au roi son oncle, en audïence:

"Sire, fet il, molt grant anfance
avez feite, et molt m'an mervoil;
mes, se vos creez mon consoil,
tant com il sont ancor si pres
je et vos irïens aprés
et cil qui i voldront venir. (222-31)

Kay is introduced early in the narrative but Gauvain is not mentioned as present or absent until this moment. The reader now knows that Gauvain has been present throughout without having made a move to answer the challenge or to influence Arthur and Kay. The time for decisive action is past. Gauvain's chiding of Arthur and call for belated action are words replacing action, words which Arthur describes as "cortois" (240). This courtesy, or concealment contains a semblance of courage: Gauvain says that nothing will prevent him from following (232-33). This show of bravado is undermined by the following words:

"cel ne seroit pas avenant
que nos aprés ax n'alessiens,
au moins tant que nos seüssiens
que la reïne devandra
et comant Kex s'an contandra." (234-38)

It would not be fitting (avenant) for them to do otherwise than to see what has happened. Propriety, not intervention is uppermost in Gauvain's mind. As in Erec, Gauvain's disinclination to fight is masked by courtoisie. He will not rush after the queen later when he perceives her from a castle window (556-601) and he will choose the easier of the two bridges. Neither he nor anyone else will try to find Lancelot after Guinevere returns although the intention is professed. What might be considered wisdom in Gauvain is only a show of conventional behaviour.

One is tempted to assume that Arthur recognizes Gauvain's failings. His use of the word "cortois" in regard to a speech which contains criticism of himself as a husband and as a king is followed by an apathetic, almost resigned acceptance of Gauvain's suggestion: since this is Gauvain's idea, Gauvain will see to the saddling of the horses, so that nothing will remain to be done except to mount (240-44). And with this mounting (li rois monte toz premerains, 247), Arthur's role is finished. The narrative does not return to him until Guinevere's adventure is over. For everyone except Kay, the "rescue" of Guinevere is a gesture, or something merely to talk about. The others all ride out with Arthur and Gauvain, but some do not take the trouble to arm themselves, or, perhaps, there are not enough arms to go around. Gauvain, however, is not only armed, he leads two extra horses. He is, by all appearances, the conventional knight on a mission.

The Figure of Kay

In all three romances, Kay represents Arthurian chivalry unmasked. In him alone is found the promptness to engage combat which is supposed to characterize the court. Because this characteristic is vested in the one person who is discourteous as well as ineffectual, he is not taken seriously by the courtiers. Yet he is the only man of action at court. His ineffectuality does not reflect upon the court at large because Gauvain sustains the illusion with words.[15] Arthur needs Kay as much as he needs Gauvain, and if he is distressed at Kay's proposal to accompany the queen (iriez et dolanz, 182), the passage allows one to interpret this as concern for Kay and not for the queen whom he hands over with no further expression of grief.

Kay has no use for the ideal of courtesy. In Erec when the hero approaches Arthur's court badly wounded and in need of care, Kay first offers a courteous invitation. When the invitation is rejected, he becomes discourteous and attempts to use force. His abduction of Guinevere consists of a subtle form of violence through the use of words. His recognition of courtesy as concealment is most clear in Yvain. He is not the only one to remain seated when the queen arrives to hear Calogrenant's tale. He alone, however, accuses Calogrenant, who did rise, of trying to enhance his reputation for both *corteisie* and *proesce* (*Yvain*, 79), the same qualities supposedly taught by Arthur's example according to the prologue (*Yvain*, 1-3). The niceties of speech and conduct are therefore in Kay's view nothing more than a putting on of appearances. The queen chides Kay, whereupon he is rude to her:

> -Dame, se nos n'i gaeignons,
> fet Kex, an vostre conpaignie,
> gardez que nos n'i perdiens mie.
> Je ne cuit avoir chose dite
> qui me doie estre a mal escrite
> et, s'il vos plest, teisons nos an:
> il n'est corteisie ne san
> de plet d'oiseuse maintenir;
> cist plez ne doit avant venir,
> que nus nel doit an pris monter.
> (*Yvain*, 92-101)

Since one is supposed to "gain" by the presence of a courtly lady, Kay's remark is a direct affront to Guinevere's status as an inspiration to her knights. Kay then defends his position: in his opinion his comments should not be held against him and since there is no courtesy or wisdom in continuing an idle quarrel except to make someone appear in a better light, the matter should be dropped. *Plet d'oiseuse* might be taken literally as Kay's comment on the idleness of the court. Kay is fully aware of the uses of courtesy, which, in his retort to Calogrenant, he considers a sign of the lack of good sense ("san", Yvain, 71-76).

Calogrenant resents Kay's attack and expresses his anger openly by comparing Kay metaphorically to numerous things including a stinking dunghill. Yvain, on the other hand, also taunted by Kay and accused of being a braggart (Yvain, 590-611), reacts indirectly. He proposes that he is too civilized to retaliate like a dog snarling back in the face of attack, and that it takes two to fight (Yvain, 630-48). He later vents his anger on Escolados, kills him, and marries his widow, all in order to prove to Kay that he is not a braggart. He then humiliates Kay in combat, to everyone's great satisfaction. Kay is very much taken aback by this turn of events. Kay recognizes the possible existence of good knights. At the fountain, prior to the combat he expresses the view that the difference between a good knight and a bad one is that the bad knight tells tall tales, foolishly believing himself believed, whereas the good knight is distressed when another takes credit for his own exploits. Kay expresses sympathy for the bad knight who must boast for he will find no one else to speak well of him: the valiant are praised, the poor knights are forgotten (Yvain, 2193-2208). With these tongue-in-cheek definitions, Kay indicates that had Yvain been successful in the adventure, he would have been present to receive the accolade.

Kay's distinction between the good knight and the bad knight is not a moral one. He knows that the goal of each is renown. He does not expect to find that Yvain is a good knight because he does not expect anyone to put into action the ideals of the court. For him, chivalry is a game and adventure only what you say it is. For this reason, in Lancelot, Kay does not stop eating throughout Meleagant's challenge. He sees another game in the offing. He is prepared to play his accustomed role but not without playing his own game first. He does not realize that he is up against a man who loves Guinevere, and that this is not a game at all. Only when he discovers that Meleagant is poisoning his wounds does he appreciate the gravity of the situation. Perhaps Meleagant assumes in his turn that Kay undertook the defense of Guinevere out of love, for he is very quick to accuse Kay of adultery. While to Meleagant Kay takes on the role of a lover, courtly or otherwise, to the reader he becomes a sympathetic, almost noble character. There is humour in the idea that Kay would seduce or be seduced by Guinevere, but only because of his unknightly characteristics, which preclude him from this role and make him comic. The humour is dissipated by the unexpected dignity with which Kay bears himself during his entire stay at Gorre. He has, in all seriousness, taken on the role of the saviour-figure. When he first meets Lancelot, he admits shame that he has been unable to accomplish what Lancelot has succeeded in doing, liberating the queen and the captives. Kay is bound by the promise he made to Arthur to bring back the queen safe and sound and he feels his failure keenly (4007-12). There is no mockery in his words. It does not occur to him that Lancelot might be bound to Guinevere by bonds other than those of loyalty to Arthur. From the ensuing discussion the reader perceives Kay's admiration for the old king Bademagu and for Guinevere, as well as his great respect for Lancelot.

Chrétien has ironically reversed the roles. Lancelot and Gauvain are no longer saviour-figures or rescuing knights coming to the aid of their queen. Lancelot does not consider himself as anything other than Guinevere's lover, and Gauvain has been sidetracked. It devolves upon Kay to demonstrate a true loyalty and feudal love to the wife of his king, to believe that a pledge given should be fulfilled in deed, not merely in word, and to place his own life in jeopardy to protect the honour of the queen. It is Kay, the ineffectual knight, who attempts to live up to the role which he undertook so lightly. When accused of adultery, Kay's reaction is unequivocal: it is inconceivable that he would commit adultery with the queen. Such an act, or even the thought of it, would be disloyal to Arthur (4858-69). He is prepared to fight, even in his weakened condition, to defend the queen's honour (4889-4900). While the reader may have every reason to doubt Kay's ability to fight, there is no need to doubt his sincerity. The reader is also aware of the irony: an innocent man incapable of winning except by a miracle of divine intervention is replaced by a guilty man whose victory implies God's exoneration of adultery.

Lancelot's replacement of Kay in the judicial duel allows Kay to make a noble gesture without having it followed by the ignominy of defeat. From this point on, Kay moves slowly back into his customary place at the bottom of the knightly ladder. He alone is named among those who return to tell the queen about the recovery of Gauvain and the missing Lancelot (5183). He and Gauvain are mentioned simultaneously (5215, 5233, 5251, and 5269). Then he slips back into final position (5293-95, 5300-11). The king, greeting the returning group, does not even acknowledge Kay's presence, nor is Kay mentioned again. Where he and Gauvain are mentioned together, action is suggested for finding Lancelot, and then thwarted. Neither one moves. It is as if they cancel each other out until the equilibrium of the illusion is once again achieved. Gauvain, acclaimed the hero, modestly and truthfully declines the honour, which he bestows upon Lancelot. Kay, who never appears as ridiculous as Gauvain, is forgotten, but Gauvain is given a hero's welcome, first by the queen and then by Arthur.

The Prisoners of Gorre

Meleagant described his prisoners as "chevaliers, dames et puceles" (53) from Arthur's land and household. This suggests an aristocracy and gives the false impression that the prisoners resemble the idle and unmarried knights and ladies at Arthur's court. On the contrary, the reader finds some of the prisoners to be happily married people with affectionate and dutiful families. They seem united by some sense of purpose since an army is mustered to fight against the people of Gorre. The common bond between all these "prisoners" is that they believe a knight will come from Logres to liberate them. Some know that Lancelot is coming to save the queen.[16] However, for those who really believe that Lancelot is the saviour for whom they have been waiting, there is the immediate understanding that the queen is the one person whose liberation will ensure the freedom of all the others (1972-1980, 2103-21), and they are prepared to leave the task to Lancelot. Others, seeing him as a military leader and inspired by his presence among them, first as rumour and then as fact (2413-21), form an army and revolt; but they are deceived, for the battle is inconclusive at night-fall, nor is it resumed. Lancelot goes his way alone, refusing to be accompanied by any other than the two who joined him the previous day (2489-2504). He is not concerned for the prisoners in general, only in performing feats of prowess which will win him the love of the queen. One family is informed, to their great distress, that Lancelot rode in the cart. However, since the accuser dies by Lancelot's hand, joy replaces grief (2944-51). The tacit assumption is that Lancelot's name has been cleared. Among the people gathered to watch the fight which will decide their freedom are young women, unadorned and barefoot, who have fasted for three days to assure the benevolence of God toward their protector (3524-31). When Lancelot becomes transfixed at the sight of Guinevere and unable to fight effectively, they fall to the ground or to their knees in grief (3683-89). Ultimately Bademagu intervenes not because he wishes to see justice done, but because he does not want his son killed. He considers himself powerless to control his own son. Therefore he uses the queen, asking her to intercede through Lancelot, as a simple courtesy in exchange for the kindness he has shown her. The queen does so, without receiving any promise from the king concerning the destiny of the prisoners or of herself (3765-94). Lancelot, indifferent to all except Guinevere's will, stops fighting the minute the queen consents to cessation, refusing even to defend himself against Meleagant's continued blows (3795-3817). In all the subsequent discussion (3847-98) no mention is made of the fate of the prisoners. An agreement is reached whereby the queen may leave, free until such time as Meleagant may challenge and defeat Lancelot at Arthur's court. Lancelot and Guinevere agree to this truce. Then the prisoners are mentioned: they are free to go according to the custom which allows all to leave if one is liberated (3899-3901). There follows an adoration of Lancelot:

> Lancelot tuit beneïssoient:
> et ce poez vos bien savoir
> que lors i dut grant joie avoir,
> et si ot il sanz nule dote. (3902-5)

The narrator is attributing to Lancelot a joy which he never shows, as the people crowd around their hero to touch him and to flatter him by insisting that they knew he would win from the moment they heard his name.

The prisoners are initially pious people, living with their families. They are depicted as increasingly naïve and foolish as, for example, in their attempts to outdo each other in hospitality after the military battle. When Lancelot killed the knight who mocked him because of the cart, the onlookers were promptly reassured of his greatness. Those who crowd around him after the combat with Meleagant do not question his motivation, notwithstanding his unorthodox manner of fighting from the moment Guinevere is perceived in the tower window. All believe Lancelot to be their saviour. There is only one prisoner who sees him as the knight-lover. It is perhaps significant that she is not outside, among the assembled throng, but high in the tower beside Guinevere and Bademagu, the latter being responsible for the "prison" binding those who believe in the courtly love tradition. This one prisoner recognizes that Lancelot is not fighting for her or for any of the gent menue:

> Mes as fenestres de la tor
> ot une pucele molt sage,
> qui panse et dit an son corage,

que li chevaliers n'avoit mie
por li la bataille arramie,
ne por cele autre gent menue
qui an la place estoit venue,
ne ja enprise ne l'eüst,
se por la reïne ne fust;
et panse, se il la savoit
a la fenestre ou ele estoit,
qu'ele l'esgardast ne veïst,
force et hardemant an preïst.
Et s'ele son non bien seüst
molt volantiers dit li eüst
qu'il se regardast un petit. (3634-49)

Like all the others she does not know his name, but she knows that he has come only for the queen. Upon learning his name from the queen, she calls to him so that he may look up and be inspired, not by God but by the sight of his lady. She is following the courtly tradition according to which the knight who loves a lady is rendered superior by his love, and she therefore believes that Lancelot will fight better if he knows that Guinevere is watching him. She is not at all prepared for the paralysis which follows, and must call again to remind Lancelot of his prowess:

"Ha! Lancelot! Ce que puet estre
que si folemant te contiens?
Ja soloit estre toz li biens
et tote la proesce an toi,
ne je ne pans mie ne croi
c'onques Dex feïst chevalier
qui se poïst apareillier
a ta valor ne a ton pris:
Or te veons si antrepris." (3692-3700)

Lancelot's renown is thus known, and the girl cannot believe her eyes, that he should conduct himself "folemant" in combat. Here is conclusive evidence that the Love which helps Lancelot (3720-33) does not make him a better knight, at least until he can place Meleagant between himself and the queen so that he may both look at her and fight at the same time. From the quoted passage one can also understand why the prisoners had confidence in Lancelot once they knew his name. They fail to see the difference between Lancelot, the great knight of a former time (soloit) and the man in love with Guinevere, the man who has forsaken his former identity as one in whom could be found "toz li biens et tote la proesce".

Lancelot's loss of identity as a knight and consequent anonymity as a saviour figure is prefigured in the cemetery scene, where he sees the names of Arthur's knights on various tombs. One tomb without a name arouses his curiosity for it is much finer than the others. He asks and the words on the slab are read to him:

> . . . "Cil qui levera
> "cele lanme seus par son cors
> "gitera ces et celes fors
> "qui sont an la terre an prison,
> "don n'ist ne clers ne gentix hon
> "des l'ore qu'il i est antrez;
> "n'ancors n'en est nus retornez:
> "les estranges prisons retienent;
> "et cil del pais vont et vienent
> "et anz et fors a lor pleisir." (1900-9)

Lancelot raises the slab but is still no wiser than before, for he must ask again:

> "et vos, s'il vos plest, me redites
> an cele tonbe qui girra?" (1932-33)

The answer is given by the monk:

> -Sire, cil qui delivrera
> toz ces qui sont pris a la trape
> el réaume don nus n'eschape." (1934-36)

The monk cannot name the man for Lancelot, nor can Lancelot tell the monk his own name. Lancelot is anonymous to himself and to others. One may infer that the tombs in the cemetery are not awaiting those whom death will overtake but those who have achieved immortality in fiction and who will not die. As Lancelot, the knight of the cart will become immortal for having committed adultery with Arthur's wife. As the liberator of the prisoners he is nameless and without identity, for it was never his purpose or intention to do so. In this scene, as when he is surrounded by the adoring crowd, Lancelot does not identify himself with the knight's role as a saviour.

There is a relationship in Lancelot as in Erec between anonymity and timelessness. In Erec, timelessness and silence accompany Enide's transition from femme to amie, her steady loss of personal identity. In Lancelot trances or meditation and the time-stopping paralyses which inhibit spontaneous knightly response all reflect various aspects of Lancelot's transition from knight to lover. There is, however, a timelessness which envelops the entire romance from the moment when Lancelot leaves Gauvain and disappears into the forest. The sense of urgency, of time lost or wasted which precedes his disappearance is not found again. A still translucence accompanies Lancelot's quest, broken only by intervals of combat which recall him, with difficulty, to his role as knight, but only to the role, not to his identity as a knight, which disappeared somehow in the forest. His anonymity is described most eloquently as he rides toward the ford:

> et cil de la charrete panse
> con cil qui force ne deffanse
> n'a vers Amors qui le justise;
> et ses pansers est de tel guise
> que lui meïsmes en oblie,
> ne set s'il est, ou s'il n'est mie,
> ne ne li manbre de son non,
> ne set s'il est armez ou non,
> ne set ou va, ne set don vient;
> de rien nule ne li sovient
> fors d'une seule, et por celi
> a mis les autres en obli;
> a cele seule panse tant
> qu'il n'ot, ne voit, ne rien n'antant. (711-24)

The sibilants rustle like dead leaves. No knight of the geste tradition forgets himself; to do so would be a fatal error, since renown, name and life itself would be lost.[17] Lancelot cannot identify with the saviour-figure he is supposed to be because he has forgotten himself in the fullest sense of the word, somewhat like an amnesia victim who cannot link his present nameless and purposeless state with past or future.

The prisoners of Gorre are prisoners of the Arthurian illusion. One prisoner only is within the tower, and may therefore be considered a prisoner of the courtly love tradition. The rest are caught in the shift from a tradition by which the knight was an exemplary man who undertook noble causes, to the new courtly tradition. They are living in an extra-fictional world where the ideals which they associate with Arthur's court cannot be realized. In their confusion they seek a saviour from a fictional and timeless world. They are portrayed as returning to Logres where their ideals may not be realized but where they flourish in perpetual *stasis*. Their salvation is illusory.

The Sur-Reality

In both *Erec* and *Yvain* Chrétien superimposes upon a given society the fiction of the ethics and roles of courtly love. This society appears to have supernatural characteristics but at the same time is presented as natural to the degree that death and suffering may be found there. At Landuc and in the enchanted garden, the protagonists create for themselves an existence which allows them to play out the roles of knight and lady in which they believe. As long as belief in the literary convention is strong, walls of air are as strong as steel and magic fountains exist. The sword-bridge in Lancelot, like the walls and the fountain, is real only if one so believes. Like the garden and the fountain also, it is the test of the lady's sovereignty over her knight, a test to prove the knight's belief that through love he can achieve immortality. Since in Lancelot is vested the double illusion of the saviour and the lover, the wounds which he receives resemble those of Christ crucified,[18] the result of the combat with Meleagant corresponds to the harrowing of hell[19] and the night with Guinevere, imbued with a religious aura, would seem to be Lancelot's personal ascent to Paradise. There is no resurrection. Lancelot's spiritual death, ultimately symbolized by the tower in which he is walled up, lasts until thoughts of Fortune and Gauvain replace his obsession with Guinevere. Only then is he ready to be liberated.[20]

The sword-bridge promises death to the saviour figure but the illusion of everlasting life to the lover. Gauvain's failure at the water-bridge maintains his image as a saviour and makes him ineligible as Guinevere's lover. Like Lancelot, Gauvain believes in the illusion; he believes that this is the only way he can enter the castle, but he lacks Lancelot's motivation. There are, of course, other entrances to the castle, accessible if one has the permission of Bademagu, the king (647-75). The people both of Gorre and of Logres have no difficulty coming to see the fight between Lancelot and Meleagant and presumably left the way they came, although the narrator makes a point of mentioning their joy that the dangerous crossings (mal pas) have been destroyed so they have freedom to come and go as they wish (4115-18). The bridge is a mental not a physical obstacle, an illusion which binds Lancelot in the same way that it keeps the people prisoner. Whatever passages the expression mal pas refers to, aside from the sword-bridge, it cannot refer to the water-bridge except in the minds of the liberated prisoners, for that bridge remains, at least until Gauvain is fished out of the water a day or so later (5105-13). It is possible that the other dangerous passage is the Passage de Pierres but that episode takes place much earlier (2194-2238) and the danger proved to be much exaggerated. It is therefore likely that the lines refer to the two bridges and that their so-called destruction is simply an indication that the illusion of the bridges has ceased to exist for the prisoners once they are given to understand that they are free. By extension, one could suggest that their prison was as illusory as the bridge and their liberation equally so.

As Lancelot and the two knights approach the sword-bridge, the narrator describes the bridge briefly as max which could mean bad in the sense of "evil" or simply "badly made". His attention is immediately turned to the torrential stream beneath (3007-16). The description evokes the violence and the roar of a spring flood hurtling downward between the confines of canyon walls. There is no doubt that anything falling into this fearsome water would be instantly swept away (3013-16). The narrator's attitude toward the water is transmitted directly and without any ambiguity.

The description of the bridge is, on the contrary, full of ambiguity and humour. He begins by oblique comparisons: this bridge is different from all the others; there has never been one like it before, nor will there ever be one like it again; if you want to know the truth, there never existed such a bad bridge (3017-21):

> Einz ne fu, qui voir m'an requiert,
> si max ponz ne si male planche: (3020-21)

The emphasis is on its nature as a bridge, even a wooden foot-bridge,[21] not on the sword which is then described in a straight-forward manner with attention given to details such as length and the manner in which it is held in place (3022-27). However, the incongruousness of the following lines undermines the seriousness of the supposedly factual information:

> Ja nus ne dot que il i chiee
> por ce que ele brist ne ploit;
> si ne sanble il pas, qui la voit,
> qu'ele puisse grant fes porter. (3028-31)

There was no need to fear that you would fall because of its bending or breaking; yet to look at it you wouldn't think it could support any great weight. The comic effect involved here is derived from the use of a pedantically rational discussion of an extravagantly irrational bridge. This is a double image, clearly depicting the bridge which Lancelot sees and crosses and the narrator's own suspicion that the bridge which he so carefully describes as if at first hand cannot exist. He ceases personal observations and withdraws to allow the knights to express what they see, saying that they are further discomfited because they think they see two lions or two leopards at the other end of the bridge (3032-37). He disclaims any personal knowledge of this particular aspect of the illusion by not specifying exactly what it is that the knights think they see. However, in the following line he settles for lions, saying that because of the water, the bridge and the lions the knights are trembling with fear. At this point the narrator withdraws altogether. The knights try to advise Lancelot on the assumption they all see the same thing (3041-43). To them, however, the bridge is simply a very badly made bridge:

> Malveisemant est fez et joinz
> cist ponz, et mal fu charpantez. (3044-45)

The danger involved in attempting to cross is hyperbolically expressed but at no time do Lancelot's companions suggest that the bridge is a sword. They then discuss the ferocity of the lions which await Lancelot on the other side. Should Lancelot manage the crossing safely, he will be completely ingested until there is nothing left but bones to gnaw upon (3060-72). They conclude by saying that to attempt the crossing is suicidal (3075-77). And Lancelot laughs. He places his faith in God, fearing the water and the bridg[illegible] more than he would fear dry land; he would rather die than turn back (3078-90). Lancelot does not even mention the lions.

When Lancelot reaches the other side, the knights rejoice at his safe arrival, yet they are unaware of his injuries even though he is bleeding badly(3130-37). The distance involved is the length of two lances, not so far that the knights could not see blood flowing in sufficient abundance that Lancelot's shirt is stained (3136-37). When Bademagu arrives, he sees Lancelot staunching the bleeding and considers the wounds serious (3310-15). Thus it would seem that to those who believe Lancelot to be a saviour-figure, the bridge is not a sword and does not wound, whereas the lions, perhaps ambiguous symbols of valiance, are frighteningly visible. Bademagu, on the other hand, is aware of the wounds but apparently not aware of the lions.

The lions are never taken seriously by Lancelot, who has been guided across the bridge by Love (3114-15) and not by God. Once on the other bank Lancelot remembers the lions which he thought he saw:

> Lors li remanbre et resovient
> des deux lyons qu'il i cuidoit
> avoir veüz quant il estoit
> de l'autre part; lors s'i esgarde:

> n'i avoit nes une leisarde,
> ne rien nule qui mal li face.
> Il met sa main devant sa face,
> s'esgarde son anel et prueve,
> quant nul des deus lyons n'i trueve
> qu'il i cuidoit avoir veüz,
> si cuida estre deceüz;
> mes il n'i avoit rien qui vive. (3118-29)

It is twice repeated that he only thought he saw the two lions. Yet he cannot believe that there is nothing there until his magic ring proves to him that there is indeed nothing there, whereupon he thinks he has been deceived. He has been deceived, for he has crossed a bridge as illusory as the lions. Had he used the ring to discover the nature of the bridge he would have seen, as did the knights, that it was just a bad bridge, but since he had been told to expect a sword-bridge, he found it, whereas no one suggested the lions to him except at the last moment and he was therefore not prepared to accept them fully.

It has already been discussed in connection with Yvain that magic rings tend to reveal an inner truth about those who believe in them and that they have no magic properties at all. Lancelot has been given a fairy ring which, if consulted, will reveal enchantment or illusion. One normally expects such a ring to liberate the hero from an externally imposed danger or imprisonment by giving him the power to recognize it as such. Chrétien openly mocks standard procedure. Fairly early in the romance, Lancelot is imprisoned by two rather ordinary portcullises. It is a trap or a war manoeuvre to prevent him and his two companions from joining the army. Nothing could be less evocative of a fairyland setting. There are no wild beasts, just a commonplace door. All three assume that there has been some form of enchantment (2332-34). Lancelot calls upon his fairy protectress to help him and sees very clearly that there is no magic.

> Lancelot porte donc l'anneau devant ses yeux, regarde la pierre, et invoque la dame. Surprise! car le message de l'anneau magique est précisément qu'il n'y a pas de surprise . . . Ce que révèle l'anneau magique est l'évidence même: lui et ses compagnons sont bel et bien imprisonnés. L'anneau magique et la valeur symbolique de pouvoir surnaturel qu'il pourrait avoir sont dissipés devant les portes coulissantes bien matérielles.[22]

Chrétien is demonstrating that in the case of an externally imposed enchantment the ring may be efficacious as long as it occurs to the hero to doubt the information given him by his senses. However, Lancelot's tendency to doubt what is real is further developed by the time of the sword-bridge crossing: the illusion takes on substance when he believes in its existence, as in the case of the bridge, or it can be dissipated by a refusal to be concerned with it, as in the case of the lions.[23] The ring serves to reveal Lancelot's incredulity in the face of actuality and his blind acceptance of illusion. He never questions the bars which separate him from Guinevere, the bonds which twice hold him prisoner at Bademagu's court, or the tower in which he is ultimately walled up. Above all, he never questions Guinevere's love. Had he used the ring to see Guinevere, he would perhaps have seen only Arthur's dutiful and loyal wife. The ring is never permitted to perform its liberating function, because the illusion is never externally imposed as a challenge to the rational appraisal of the prisoner. It is powerless in the case of self-imposed illusion or delusion.

As Lancelot crosses the bridge he is observed by Meleagant and Bademagu, each watching side by side from a separate window high above. Bademagu is described as if he were a good king and an honourable man:

> Apoiez a une fenestre
> s'estoit li rois Bademaguz,
> qui molt ert soutix et aguz
> a tote enor et a tot bien,
> et lëauté sor tote rien
> voloit par tot garder et faire; (3142-47)

His son is the antithesis of everything considered knightly:

> et ses filz, qui tot le contraire
> a son pooir toz jorz feisoit,
> car deslëautez li pleisoit,
> n'onques de feire vilenie
> et traïson et felenie
> ne fu lassez ne enuiez,
> s'estoit delez lui apoiez; (3148-54)

While they seem at this instant to represent "good" and "bad" in equal and detached balance, it should be remembered that they are watching a ritual which could only have taken place with Bademagu's permission. As an honourable king it surely behooved him to admit Lancelot by the main door, return to him the queen and hold his son in check. He is, after all, the king. The _seigneur_ who rules over the _pré aux jeux_ forcibly restrained his son from fighting with Lancelot, allowing Lancelot to continue on his way with the lady coveted by his son.

Bademagu, however, is not good, he is simply courtly, which means that unlike the father in the _pré aux jeux_, he must allow the combat for the queen to take place if he cannot persuade his son to withdraw. The theory behind his actions is that the queen must be won by the superior, and therefore more worthy knight. He pledges to help Lancelot against his son (3254-71, 3297-3302, 3335-45, and 3368-88), yet he twice intercedes against Lancelot to protect his son. He uses force to restrain Meleagant only when the latter does not follow the rules of knightly combat (3838-41). He promises Lancelot safe-conduct, but is let down by his men who see Lancelot as an enemy to their king and take him prisoner, thinking to oblige Bademagu (4124-26). To the people he rules, Bademagu's behaviour must seem inconsistent: he allows his son to capture Guinevere, he allows a combat but intervenes to save his son, arranges a future combat which will no doubt result in his son's death, but allows Lancelot safe-conduct.

Bademagu is attempting to create a court of love according to the precept that love is an ennobling force. He plays by the rules until he fears for the life of his son. He is an Arthur-figure transposed into a world where death must be recognized. An awareness of death is the only factor which influences his otherwise consistently courtly behaviour. Like Arthur he is useless as a king but unlike Arthur he must bear the burden of the illusion himself, since Meleagant refuses to be transformed into a Gauvain figure. He cannot control his son, any more than Arthur can control Kay. He dwells high in his tower, remote from all the practical considerations of his position as either king or father. Meleagant, the symbol of the uncourtly, prevails, for he is the counterpart of Kay, the only man of action available. Kay's faults are magnified in Meleagant who is, moreover, a strong and relentless fighter. Where Kay cannot seriously endanger the Arthurian illusion or its society, Meleagant, sufficiently restrained at Gorre to do no great harm, is, in Logres, capable of destroying the illusion. He must be killed by Lancelot in a confrontation between the courtly and the uncourtly. With the power of the illusion restored, it may be assumed that other courts, like that of Bademagu, will try to become courts of love, and other prisoners of the Arthurian illusion will be taken. These prisoners will not resemble those caught in the shifting literary tradition, who were waiting for a knight-saviour to release them, but willing prisoners like Guinevere and Lancelot, or like Bademagu himself. Meleagant's words to Arthur contained prophetic vigour:

> et saches bien qu'ainsi morras
> que ja aidier ne lor porras. (59-60)

Arthur cannot die until the greatness of his court is revealed to be a fiction. Once the illusion is dispelled, the prisoners will be free to resume their place in time and within time find a more durable salvation.

NOTES

[1] Jacques Ribard, Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* (Paris: Nizet, 1972).

[2] F. Douglas Kelly, *"Sens" and "Conjointure" in the "Chevalier de la Charrette"* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton & Co., 1966).

[3] D. D. R. Owen, "Profanity and its Purpose in Chrétien's *Cligés* and *Lancelot*," *AR*, p. 45.

[4] A. H. Diverres, "Some Thoughts on the *Sens* of *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*," *AR*, p. 24.

[5] Diverres interprets Lancelot's failure as a true courtly lover as due to *démesure*, demonstrated in the cart episode by his rejection of Reason for Love, pp. 25-26. Peter Haidu, *Lion-queue-coupée* (Geneva: Droz, 1972), pp. 53-57, gives a detailed analysis [illegible] this episode demonstrating the carefully developed symbolic opposition between the words *chevalier* and *charrette*. He concludes: "En acceptant de monter dans la charrette, le chevalier renie les valeurs de la société qu'il sert et qu'il représente comme figure exemplaire. La réprobation de la société s'érige en leitmotiv dans l'oxymoron emblématique -"le chevalier de la charrette" - qui recouvre son anonymat et qui le suit à travers ses aventures. Seulement anecdotique au début du roman, le symbole acquiert sa pleine valeur plus tard lorsque Lancelot parachève son devoir et atteint son but au tournoi de Noauz: l'abnégation totale devant l'Amour totalitaire."

[6] Z. P. Zaddy, *Chrétien Studies* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1973), pp. 123-124, considers Lancelot a man of principle. She sees Lancelot in this episode as resolving a moral dilemma "with the wisdom of Solomon."

[7] It should be noted that Lancelot is still aware of the stigma of an accusation of cowardice (*Malvestiez*) whereas later in the tournament he will

be indifferent to the charge of knightly dishonour, aware only of the necessity of obeying the queen's commands. Compare 1100-1115 with 5654-5673 and 5740-56.

[8] The similarities between this episode and Yseut's adultery and ordeal are obvious. Yseut lacks Lancelot's mindless innocence. Béroul, *The Romance of Tristran*, ed. Alfred Ewart (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), ll. 4197-4231.

[9] Haidu, pp. 44-48, analysing the comic effects of this episode, does not see it as enhancing Lancelot's reputation either as a knight or as a lover. The test is characterized by the hero's inaction. For the contrary view see Diverres, p. 27.

[10] "The easy attainment of love makes it of little value, difficulty of attainment makes it prized." Rule XIV, Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, translated by J. J. Parry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), p. 185.

[11] The translation of *peser* as "to be sorry" is not altogether an expression of the writer's bias, for the verb is repeated so often in this scene that it is robbed of all dignity as an expression of sincere grief: 63, with *durement*; 93; 135, Guinevere is speaking; 180; 184, *repesa*, a reference to the queen; 222, the courtiers are sorry, an ironic use of *peser* since it is preceded by *grant duel firent* (215) and succeeded by their refusal to act; 312, Gauvain regrets having arrived too late (*se li pesa molt et desplot*).

[12] Tom Peete Cross and William Albert Nitze, *Lancelot and Guenevere* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1930), pp. 31-32 and p. 69.

[13] E. R. Curtius discusses the *topos* of the world upside down and its relationship to the *topos* of criticism of prevailing customs as compared with those of a former, better time (*florebat olim*). *Europaïsche Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Berne: A. Francke, 1948), pp. 102-6. This relationship is ironically reversed in *Yvain*: Arthur's court is introduced as representing a former ideal which is then depicted as "upside down" as the narrative

begins. In Lancelot, the florebat olim aspect may be said to occur later in the laments of the prisoners awaiting a saviour.

[14] Guinevere's refusal to recognize Lancelot's sacrifices for her is taken very seriously by Lancelot, but to Guinevere it is only a joke, "et sel cuidai ge feire a gas," (4205).

[15] Gauvain does not even fight in the tournament. He watches (5952-60).

[16] Those who know that Lancelot is coming for the queen are the monk at the cemetery (1972-80), the father of the first family of prisoners (2103-21) and the young lady who calls Lancelot by name (3634-42). Bademagu also knows ("la reïne, ce croi, querez," 3345), but he is not expecting to be liberated.

[17] Margaret Pelan, "Old French s'oublier," Romantisches Jahrbuch 10 (1959): 59-62.

[18] "Par le moyen des blessures, l'auteur évoque symboliquement les blessures de Jésus-Christ crucifié. C'est cette double invocation de la religion à l'occasion d'un sacrifice amoureux qui a permis de parler du 'transfert des données religieuses sur un plan profane' comme 'un des principes de la courtoisie', et de dire qu' 'une religion d'amour se fonde', dans laquelle Lancelot serait 'un saint de l'amour courtois'. Mais cette manière de voir ne tient pas compte du jeu plaisant auquel se livre l'auteur." The "jeu plaisant" consists of the sudden disappearance of the lions and Lancelot's use of a ring which makes the hero appear slightly ridiculous. Haidu, pp. 31-32.

[19] Owen sees a parody of the Gospel of Nicodemus in Lancelot's own Harrowing of Hell and gives excellent examples of Chrétien's portrayal of Lancelot in the role of "predestined saviour", which he considers parody. "Profanity," pp. 42-45.

[20] Godefroi de Leigni's conclusion to the romance begins after Lancelot is walled up in the tower, around v. 6150 in the opinion of Mario Roques in his introduction to his edition of Lancelot, p. ix. The

conclusion seems consistent with the first part of the romance although Lancelot's liberation from his obsession with Guinevere, albeit over the course of a year, forms a rather startling contrast with the depth of his passion.

21 Roques' glossary gives "tablier de pont (?), planche de passerelle" for planche with reference to lines 3021 and 3311. A. J. Greimas, Dictionnaire de l'ancien français (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1969), gives "petit pont de bois". W. Foerster's Wörterbuch zu Kristian von Troyes' sämtlichen Werken (1914; reprinted Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1966), gives Planke and Steg.

22 Haidu, p. 30.

23 This aspect of the bridge crossing is commented upon by Alexandre Micha but within a different context. Lancelot's disregard for the lions is interpreted as a sign of courage and moral worth: "il n'est que d'oser, et d'être juste," "Sources de la Charrette," Rom 71 (1950): 355.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

When this study of Erec, Yvain and Lancelot was begun, it was envisaged as an inquiry into the nature of the illusions which found their source in Arthur's court. I had previously demonstrated in a study of Yvain that Arthur's court represented no workable ideal and that the hero's attempts to model himself upon Gauvain resulted in a loss of identity. The theme of anonymity combined with the inability to recognize illusion seemed clear also in Lancelot. Erec proved a major stumbling-block to the hypothesis that Arthurian values could not be successfully transferred to society outside Arthur's court since Erec's final return to the court and his subsequent coronation in Nantes among supposedly historic personages seemed an unwarranted apotheosis of a rather foolish knight. Dissatisfied with the seemingly inevitable conclusion that Chrétien had tacked on an ending simply to conform to romance convention, I started again from the beginning, this time with a view to examining Chrétien's use of that convention. Gradually the numerous and previously irreconcilable conflicts in

Erec were resolved and the structure of the romance became apparent. Arthur's court emerged as a fiction which governed the actions of the major characters within a world not ruled by romance convention and therefore inimical to the hero's aspirations, except where fiction had created a collective illusion, as in the case of the Plantagenets. With this very gratifying discovery it seemed more profitable to pursue an inquiry into Chrétien's uses of fiction in *Yvain* and *Lancelot*.

Because of the unwieldy complexity of *Erec*, a detailed and sometimes repetitious analysis of the entire romance has been given. It was judged necessary to include numerous excerpts from the text not only to provide foundations for the assumptions made but to avoid, wherever possible, destroying the delicate touches of humour, irony and ambiguity which could not otherwise be transmitted. I have not attempted to do justice to Chrétien's humour, prefering rather to provide a framework within which explanation is superfluous.

There was no necessity to use the same cumbersome method for *Yvain*. The structure of the romance is clear because the interpretation depends less upon interlace and more upon paratactic juxtaposition of fiction and fact. Further, the narrator does not confuse the reader but invites him to become an accomplice. For these reasons intensive study has for the most part been reserved for episodes in which there is a confrontation between the conventional assumptions as to the action taking place and the factual information given. As in _Erec_, Arthur's court is designated as a source, but not the example, of the ideals put into action by the misguided few.

Lancelot, unlike _Erec_ and _Yvain_, presents major difficulties which remain unresolved. It is clear, in my opinion, that Chrétien has depicted the hero as representing two mutually exclusive conventional roles, that of courtly lover and that of the selfless champion of a good cause, whereas Lancelot is neither of these but the dishonoured Chevalier de la Charrette. Arthur's court is the focal point for illusions based on both literary traditions without providing an example for either, except by literary sleight of hand through Lancelot.

There are two major obstacles to understanding the romance as a whole. A study should be made of the role of the narrator. On the one hand, he is as deceived and deceiving as is the narrator in _Erec_. On the other hand, he does not share with Erec's narrator the unwavering confidence in his hero's wisdom. He makes no attempt to conceal Lancelot's foolishness. Only rarely does he attempt to make the audience his accomplice after the manner of the narrator in Yvain. There is no apparent consistency in his viewpoint. A second and no doubt related problem arises from the fact that there is no clearly defined structure.[1] One might be tempted to accept the proposition that Lancelot is not well constructed or that the difficulties might be resolved had Chrétien written his own conclusion. However, our knowledge of Chrétien's ability as the author of Erec and Cligès tends to preclude this assumption. I am sure, for example, that the Passage de Pierres has a purpose beyond that of demonstrating Lancelot's determination to pursue the most difficult path or of showing that all difficulties can be dissipated by determination to succeed. Furthermore, the attempts of Lancelot's unidentified lady to lead him away from the fountain and Guinevere's comb must be more than a test of the knight's singleness of purpose since there is no indication that she is aware of his love for Guinevere or that she doubts his high purpose.

The boundary between Logres and Gorre is not given. On the basis of Meleagant's claim of prisoners taken, one may assume that Gorre is advancing upon Logres. Yet Lancelot's maiden refers to customs which existed before those of Logres supplanted them. It would seem that the encroachment of Logres is that of fiction transmitting the illusory ideals of courtly love into an extra-fictional world. However, the maiden's world is not extra-fictional by the definitions I have set up, because death does not exist there. Her men are cut to pieces by each other with Lancelot's assistance and yet pick themselves up and leave when she so bids them. They are either immortal or illusory. Death is perhaps a reality at the pré aux jeux where the father refuses to allow his son to fight. However the cemetery, which I have interpreted as announcing the immortality of romance heroes, lies further on and it is beyond this point that the lady turns back, leaving Lancelot to proceed alone into the land of the prisoners of Gorre.[2] The clues are multiple but conflicting. There seems to be deliberate concealment here as there was in Lancelot's first forest encounter. This technique is reminiscent of the deceptions practiced in Erec where deception was essentially the result of the concealing nature of the various romance conventions followed.

Another area of conflict centers around the mockery of Lancelot. Once again there seems to be no consistency. He is mocked when he first mounts the cart and is denied the right to sleep in the perillous bed because of it. The next day the lady treats the matter first seriously and then, as she provides Lancelot with a new horse and lance, more in jest than in earnest (471-95, 575-82, and 483-90). At the *pré aux jeux* Lancelot is first mocked and then, when allowed safe-conduct, treated with respect. Similarly the family with whom Lancelot takes lodging on another occasion is greatly distressed when he is accused of riding in a cart. They rejoice when Lancelot kills his accuser, as if reassured that there had been some error. At the *Passage de Pierres* Lancelot's adversaries recognize that he comes "por mal" (2205) but no mention is made of the cart and the narrator tells us they wish him no harm. When these inconsistencies are resolved the assumptions I have made may prove erroneous or, to take a more optimistic view, they may be found to be a part of a more complex pattern. *Lancelot*, like *Erec*, seems to rely heavily upon interlace for its interpretation. This knowledge is useless without a corresponding knowledge of the conventions which Chrétien followed or the sources which he amalgamated with convention.

Chrétien's devices, techniques and sources of ideas demand of his audience a considerable breadth, if not depth, of knowledge if his irony is to be fully appreciated. The irony inherent in Erec's coronation cannot be perceived unless one knows that there existed a vast body of political philosophy stemming from Plato and continuing down to the Middle Ages through such men as Cicero and Macrobius until it found relatively contemporary expression in such men as Hugh de Fleury and John of Salisbury. The guests at the coronation may be explained by the desire of Henry II to trace his ancestry back to Arthur and beyond. Chrétien exploited the scepticism which reigned, in some circles at least, concerning the validity of judicial duels not only to make Yvain, Gauvain and Arthur appear quite foolish in their final conventionally glorious scene, but also to undermine the basic premise of Arthurian fiction, that all combat is justifiable on the grounds that it can establish legal or moral issues or, more simply, that might is right. Common sense alone is not always sufficient if one is to understand Chrétien's use of fiction. The information given above is not essential to the perception of Chrétien's irony in general but it is extremely helpful in understanding specific references and in estimating how Chrétien's audience would have received his romances.

While Chrétien uses the "matière de Bretagne" as the basis for the "fictions" which motivate his heroes and heroines, and also the basis upon which they create their own "fiction", it seems likely that not all the illusions associated with Arthur's court by Chrétien were part of the romance convention of his period. His preoccupation with kingship and justice, for example, seem to be his own contribution to the illusions of convention.

Another provocative aspect of Chrétien's work is the free adaptation of Celtic materials. Instead of exploiting the Celtic supernatural and its concomitant atmosphere of timelessness, he transforms the supernatural into the natural and restores time to its natural place. He uses the portcullises of Landuc and the rushing waters of Brandigan and Gorre to evoke concepts of the Celtic hero's passage to the underworld of death but the customary conclusion is missing. The hero does not return victorious from his test, able at last to revitalize the society to which he belongs. In Chrétien's Otherworld, the hero loses himself in gratification of the senses and proves himself indifferent to the society which he purports to serve. It may therefore be suggested that whether or not this material was at Chrétien's time already incorporated into Arthurian material, the audience was familiar with the meaning of the original material and aware of Chrétien's ironic treatment of it. Chrétien's selection of Celtic material does more than call attention to the hero's alienation from concepts of this world and its society. It also indicates his sceptical attitude with respect to the relationship between the supernatural and this world: the former is understood as a personally created illusion. Wace went in search, perhaps from an armchair, of a storm-creating fountain in "Brecheliant" and remarked:

> La alai jo merveilles querre,
> vi la forest et vi la terre,
> merveilles quis, mais nes trovai,
> fol m'en revinc, fol i alai;
> fol i alai, fol m'en revinc,
> folie quis, por fol me tinc.
> (Roman de Rou, 6393-98)[3]

This passage has remarkable affinities with Calogrenant's summary of his adventure:

> Einsi alai, einsi reving;
> au revenir por fol me ting.
> Si vos ai conté come fos
> ce c'onques mes conter ne vos.
> (Yvain, 577-80)

One should therefore be very cautious in dealing with incorporated Celtic legend. There may be changes due to faulty transmission or understanding, but there may equally well be an ironic purpose.

Timelessness as associated with alienation from society and loss of identity within society would seem derived in Chrétien's romances from concepts found in Provençal love poetry and not from the Celtic material.[4] The knight's adventure is not a voyage beyond time in order to renew the cycle of time, as in the Celtic material. His quest leads him from the *stasis* of Arthur's court into a world where time exists but where his goal is *stasis*. It is likely that romance convention reflected the view expressed in Wace's *Brut* that the knight should merit his lady's love by demonstrations of prowess:

> Ja ne veïssiez chevalier
> Qui de rien feïst a prisier
> Qui armes et dras et ator
> N'eüst trestot d'une color;
> D'une color armes feisoient
> Et d'une color se vestoient.
> Si rerent les dames prisiees
> D'une color aparelliees.
> Ja nul chevalier n'i eüst,
> De quel paraige que il fust,
> Ja poïst avoir druerie,
> Ne cortoise dame a amie,
> Se il n'eüst trois foiz estez
> De chevalerie esprovez.[5]

The Provençal contribution made it possible for the lady to reflect the knight's aspirations, or illusions of grandeur, and not his actual accomplishments. The Provençal poet created or refashioned his lady to suit his poetic needs while her actual existence remained irrelevant. This aspect of love reappears in the first part of the Roman de la Rose by Guillaume de Lorris, but without creating conflicts since the dreamer is not also depicted as a knight supposedly with a purpose in society.[6] In Erec, Yvain and Lancelot Chrétien presents as convention the knight-lady relationship found in Wace. He simultaneously negates this convention with the concept derived from the Provençal poet's narcissism. We know that aspects of courtly love conventions appear, for example, in the Lais of Marie de France and in the Tristan legends. The lady as the lover's own creation is manifest in Ovid's Ars amatoria and the Remedia, which Chrétien claims to have translated (Cligès, 1-3), and which is an ironic treatment of this aspect of love. It is likely Chrétien himself, however, who made of the lady the knight's self-image in such a way that she might reflect unsubstantiated renown. This is an area which deserves much greater consideration than I have given it.

Chrétien's use of the geste tradition also deserves further consideration. In Erec, the narrator names characters from geste who would have trembled at the sight of the impaled heads in the enchanted garden, whereas Erec is not afraid. The narrator is extolling Erec's courage. The author is indicating that Erec is filled only with that intrepid curiosity which is the mark of the romance hero but which never leads him to understand why he is fighting. The geste hero always knew why he was fighting and for him death, however glorious, was real. Erec's sounding of the horn, heard far across the land, recalls the death of Roland which was brought about not as a result of wounds received in battle but by the blowing of the horn. Roland's horn may be said to signal the defeat of his own concept of honour, that of not envisaging or admitting defeat. Erec is not defeated by Maboagrain but by his own destruction of the garden, by the symbolic horn which breaks the silence of illusion. Paradise opens to receive Roland while Erec ironically returns to Arthur's court as an immortal hero. The geste tradition is invoked to disparage, not extoll, the romance hero and his illusions. Similarly, in Lancelot the bedroom battle is a parody of geste. The vocabulary belongs to geste but Lancelot does not slaughter his adversaries. He so places them that they slaughter each other. His rather *geste*-like challenge, that he is prepared to take on any number of them is, significantly, made with the bed and presumably the lady between himself and the enemy and with his back to the wall. The later battlefield action is not in the *geste* tradition and presents the irony that the three men do not instantly or instinctively know which side is theirs. There is no clear distinction in the strange land of Gorre between right and wrong or friend and foe, and the will of God has no part to play in the combat. Chrétien's pillaging of the *Enéas* in *Erec* to reveal the narrator's attitude toward Erec's destiny seems also to indicate Chrétien's view that epic and romance were incompatible and could not be fused. The opposing view sustained by the narrator is one of the sources of the narrator's error.

Thus, in summary, when I speak of "romance convention" as used by Chrétien, I am speaking of all that he associates with Arthur's court as illusion and not necessarily of the existing tradition since it is difficult to disassociate Chrétien from the tradition. My interest has been in the Arthurian "fiction", in its figurative sense, and the interplay between it and Chrétien's figurative reality, not in the sources of that fiction. However, even a cursory view of sources which Chrétien may have adapted to suit his purposes suggests various avenues of investigation. I do not know if it is possible to isolate Chrétien's own additions to convention, but I am sure that it is possible to re-evaluate his personal use of the sources already known and to discover any number of specific borrowings. From such research it might be possible to give a complete interpretation of Lancelot.

One of the most interesting and unprecedented devices in Chrétien's works is the replacement of rational action and conversation by convention and rhetoric. John of Salisbury, defending the teaching of eloquence as a necessary prerequisite to philosophical studies, considers that through speech reason brings order to human society. Only through speech can man's power of reason distinguish him from animals.[7] Reason without speech is as useless as speech without reason. The truth or falsity of speech depends on and is judged by its meaning. The love of truth is "inborn in reason" (Bk. IV, ch. 36, p. 262). Reason, through speech, seeks understanding of what actually is and speech expresses or should express what actually is. In his Metalogicon John of Salisbury is developing theological and philosophical principles which explain the purpose of eloquence as that which moves men to such understanding of immutable and eternal truth as human imperfection can achieve. It is thus perhaps not a standard by which one should judge romance fiction or poetry in which eloquence has other ends. The Metalogicon does, however, provide a point of view against which the actions and speech of Erec or Lancelot and at times Yvain may be deemed totally unreasonable, and not just because they are fallible as all men are fallible:

> Slipping about in a mire of incertitude, man apprehends as much as he can. At times his opinions are true, inasmuch as they constitute accurate representations of reality. At other times, however, they are fallacious, since they are vitiated by empty, deceptive illusions. An opinion is true if it perceives things as they actually are. Speech is true if it presents things as they really are.
> (Bk. IV, ch. 33, p. 254)

When John of Salisbury speaks of "reality" or "things as they actually are", he is speaking of this world here below, characterized by time and mutability, and yet within which reason is capable of forming sound judgement:

> . . . reason is the instrument whereby the mind effects all its cognition. Reason's special function is to investigate and apprehend the truth. The contrary of the virtue of reason is imbecility and [consequent] lack of power to investigate and determine the truth. The contrary of the activity of investigating the

> truth, which we have above called "reason", is error. (Bk. IV, ch. 38, p. 266)

The error committed by Chrétien's heroes consists of not seeing things as they are known by the senses and of using words which have no relationship with such phenomena at all. Chrétien was obviously aware of arguments similar to those cited above which stipulate that society is bound together by good works dictated by reason through speech. Otherwise he would not consistently have used irrational speech, or words isolated from the reality of "what actually is", to portray loss of reason and the resultant destruction of normal human relationships. Yet his works contain none of the invective to be found in the Metalogicon against those who misuse speech. Chrétien seems cognizant of the theological implications of the error but refrains from teaching theological doctrine by refraining also from making rhetoric the specific cause of error.

One key to Chrétien's attitude to the "eloquence" or rhetoric of romance may be found in the dialectic or parody of dialectic in Yvain. The narrator debates the rational validity of concepts derived from rhetoric and then cannot arrive at any definite conclusion. The action which closes the debate reveals that the rhetorical content is irrelevant to the action. Rhetoric and action belong in two separate worlds, the former to a world suspended in stasis, the latter to a world subject to time, and more important, to reason. A positive example of the use of dialectic is found in Enide's rhetorical monologues in the first series of adventures. They conclude with the defeat of the illusory, the victory of reason, and the rational use of speech as a directive to rational action.

Rhetoric in romance fiction, unlike eloquence in theological argument, has no logical consequence. It is its own justification, its own internal consequence and is not subject to rational criteria concerning what actually is or is not. Chrétien would appear to consider rhetoric in the same way that he views Arthur's court. His rhetoric is essentially benevolent, immune from social considerations, and in no way to be construed as a directive to action, as an example of action or as a vehicle for conveying any truth other than that which pertains in rhetoric's own realm. Its worth is to be measured by the quality of its illusion, not by that of its reality.

Chrétien's game, if such it may be called, consists of removing such rhetoric or fiction from the timelessness which is its essence and placing it within a social context where words are supposed to spring from reason and direct both thought and action. He portrays Arthur's court as useless in the domain of action but never as morally reprehensible. Like rhetoric, the court proves to be little more than skillfully chosen and artfully arranged words woven together to create illusion. It is only when illusion is mistaken for reality that reason is subverted. Thus it can be said that Chrétien does not condemn rhetoric or art or the illusions they create. Nor does he condemn those who cannot distinguish fact from fiction. With grace and humour he simply depicts the fact of their fiction.

NOTES

[1] Thus far I have found neither F. Douglas Kelly nor Z. P. Zaddy helpful in this respect. See Zaddy's Chrétien Studies (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1973), pp. 110-120, for a summary of Kelly's structural analysis and her own opposing view.

[2] F. Douglas Kelly has an article on this subject which does not solve the problems I have raised. "Two Problems in Chrétien's Charrette: the Boundary of Gorre and the Use of novele," Neophilologus 48 (1964): 115-21.

[3] Le Roman de Rou de Wace, II, edited by A. J. Holden, Société des anciens textes français (Paris: Editions A. & J. Picard & C^ie^, 1971).

[4] The Provençal contribution to the concept of the lady as the poet's self-image as explained by Frederick Goldin, The Mirror of Narcissus, is mentioned in notes 23 and 88 to Chapter II of this study.

[5] La partie arthurienne du "Roman de Brut", edited by I. D. O. Arnold and M. M. Pelan (Paris: Klincksieck, 1962), vv. 1957-74, which correspond to lines 10,503-16 of ms. A, Bibliothèque Nationale Française 794.

[6] There is a passage in the Roman de la Rose from which it might be inferred that Guillaume de Lorris envisaged Arthurian fiction very much as does Chrétien in Erec. Indeed the wording of the passage makes it seem almost derived from Erec or as if referring to Erec himself (Les classiques français du moyen âge, Paris: Champion, 1974), vv. 1173-80:

> Largeice la vaillant, la sage,
> tint un chevalier dou lignage
> le bon roi Artu de Bretaigne;
> ce fu cil qui porta l'enseigne
> de valor et le gonfanon:
> encor est il de tel renon
> que l'en conte de li les contes
> et devant rois et devant contes.

[7] John of Salisbury, Metalogicon, translated by Daniel D. McGarry (Berkely and Los Angeles: University

of California Press, 1955), Bk I, ch. 1, p. 11. Other references to this work will be incorporated into the body of the text.

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